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MR. DOBBS AND HIS DOINGS;

A STORY OF MODERN LIFE.

BOOK I.

MR. DOBBS'S MARRIAGE TOUR.

RIDE SI SAPIS.

MANCHESTER:
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1861.

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MR. DOBBS AND HIS DOINGS.

CANTO FIRST.

Sister Anne was a maiden so modest and gentle;
She wore a white bonnet and pale lilac mantle:
And Dobbs was a boy—he has many a brother—
Who had buried one wife, and much wanted another.

Sister Anne was just twenty, sedate and demure;
Knew nothing of love—oh, nothing, I'm sure:
But her heart in its innocent longings would swell
For she did not know what—and of course could not tell.

O'er his port Dobbs would sigh to think girls were so fickle,
While the tears down his nose sentimentally trickle;
But this fair enchantress in love's spell so bound him,
In his dreams a whole bevy of Annes dance around him.

So the love-smitten Dobbs then bethought of a scheme—
He would teach Anne to write—than which nothing would seem
More fit or more proper: putting this only in—
Why should he have waited six years to begin?

Yet, since time had been lost, they the more were constrained
To lose nothing now of the time that remained;
So night after night, when old Dobbs was at home,
With her copy-book Anne to the parlour would come.

And there as she sat he would sit, too, beside her,
And through all the mysteries of capitals guide her;
While he in his heart knew, and she knew as well,
There was something they both knew they cared not to tell.

And the fact was that Anne in her heart really felt
A strong disposition to—somehow to melt;
And Dobbs, too, he felt so exactly the same,
That one night—ah, surely he could not for shame!

He actually did then—well, what did he do?
I am sure I don't know, my good sir; pray, do you?
But he surely did something? I think so, as well;
But if nobody knows—how can anyone tell?

The fact is, they both kept their secret so close,
What happened between them yet nobody knows;
I have pumped all Anne's friends to the best of my skill,
But even to them 'tis a mystery still.

The utmost from all the known facts I can sift,
Is that Anne bolted off in a terrible tift;
Like a high-mettled mare with a snift and a snort,
Her six years of service with Dobbs was cut short.

But Dobbs in his solitude could not forget her,
So he daily despatched her a woebegone letter;
She has forty epistles he wrote in six weeks,
Tied up in a bundle, like lettuce or leeks.

Till at length she did think that—in fact she begun to
Find the work rather hard in the place she had gone to;
And she sighed for the home of her former existence,
With comfort around her, and Dobbs in the distance.

She sighed, and she trembled, with something not fear,
When she thought how old Dobbs had been getting so near;
And she thought of the lessons he gave her at night,
When Dobbs had been teaching her—merely to write.

Ah, sweet sister Anne! ah, naughty old Dobbs!
There's a sly little fellow has done both your jobs;
Your spirits have mixed in magnetic communion,
Which nothing will cure but the mystical union.

Though fifty and twenty may not be so pat,
That sly little fellow cares nothing for that;
He has got you entangled—get out as you can;
Ah, naughty old Dobbs! ah, sweet sister Anne!

II.

Mr. Dobbs was a man of exceeding repute;
A justice of peace and churchwarden to boot;
A man of so fair and unblemished renown,
There was none more looked up to in Dumbledom town.

He had lived so entirely eschewing all evil,
No man need less fear the assaults of the devil;
But just because his life was blameless as Job's,
The devil had long had an eye upon Dobbs.

In his youth he was wildish, or so it was said,
But married before he had got far misled;
And so settled down in the solid old fashion
Of men who have judgment to bridle their passion.

His wife was a woman of tact and decision,
With youth and with beauty and worldly position;
And steered him so cleverly, sly little elf,
He thought all the while he was steering himself.

And with natural tendencies not very bad,
How small was the chance then the poor devil had;
But still Dobbs was somehow a man just so good
The devil would try for and catch if he could.

While the first Mrs. Dobbs had the house in command,
The devil's proceedings were quite at a stand;
But after her exit there came on the scene
Sister Anne, a sweet creature of artless fourteen.

Forty-four to fourteen had a fatherly feeling,
A kindly solicitude nothing concealing;
But somehow the eyes would unconsciously fix
When sixteen was waiting on fresh forty-six.

Forty-eight looked on eighteen a full blooming girl
With a glance that foreboded embroilment and peril;
And then 'twas the devil first discerned in that glance—
The devil that he is—that he now had a chance.

Was Dobbs then a humbug? his virtue a lie?
And Anne's sweet simplicity—all in her eye?
Ah, no; had you gazed on her face you could tell
She was proof against all the devices of hell.

But Dobbs had a weakness, long latent no doubt;
But ready the first chance it had to peep out;
For his virtue that stalked forth so stately and strong,
Lay only in this—that he had not done wrong.

And this was sufficient for the world thus to make him
The idol for which it delighted to take him;
And this made it dreadful to think what a handle
Anne's bolt off would be to retailers of scandal.

How they'd work it and pump up the dregs and the dirt,
To poke, and examine, and sniff at;—in short
Old Dobbs went all cold with a shudder to think
Of the terrible ordeal from which we all shrink.

And then like a phrensy the thought of Anne's charms,
He dreamed of, and doated on, snatched from his arms,
So goaded and lashed him—he ordered his carriage—
Rode over to see Anne—and offered her marriage.

But judge Dobbs's horror—how he quailed at the blow,
When Anne answered downright and sturdily—no;
I'll go back as I was if you'll pledge me your word
No more on this subject shall ever be heard.

Poor Dobbs was dumfoundered—all struck of a heap—
Called his carriage—rode home—went to bed—not to sleep;
While the devil was so satisfied all would go right,
He considered old Dobbs as his own from that night.

III.

Ah me, this old serpent, 'tis time he was scotched;
The best laid out life by his means may be botched;
And youth by his cunning, ere it knows what he's doing,
May stand in the midst of its own early ruin.

Then the terrible conflict that comes as the cost,
To arise and to conquer—or go down and be lost;
To arise and through long years of battle contend,
Or be trodden down nameless, unwept in the end.

And haply, half-spent, to be laurelled at last,
When the dream and illusion of glory is past;
And the world-honoured victor is mocked with a crown
Which for peace and repose he would gladly lay down.

And worse is the fate when for years we have stood
In fair outward seeming the wise and the good;
Reputation re-echoed more quickly and loud,
That it aimed not too high for the clamouring crowd.

Aye, worse is the fate when the tempter comes then
With his serpentine windings uncoiled from his den,
Stealing on through the grass as he leaves at our feet
The too-tempting morsel, forbidden and sweet.

Aye, worse is that fate, as old Dobbs soon discovers,
When his old heart is rent with the pangs of young lovers;
The bait seemed so sweet and so dangled before him,
He saw not the sword by a hair hanging o'er him.

He gazed in its eyes, and he fed on its form;
He hung o'er its loveliness panting and warm;
He drank of delusion so deeply and wild—
He must have his toy—and he would be a child.

Ah me, this old serpent, what things he can do
With old folks, and young folks, and middle aged too,
When a man like old Dobbs—a respectable man—
Forgets himself as only men in love can.

'Tis the system the devil has pursued from the first,
Whereof his poor victim has always the worst;
With a bait so alluring your passion he'll whet it,
But when you are caught—don't you wish you may get it?

The fact is, those lessons in writing became
To old Dobbs what the moth finds the beautiful flame;
It imagines some heaven-gate girt with gold fringes—
At least until after it gets a few singes.

And Anne was so innocent, guileless, and free,
She dreamed not a moment what mischief might be;
She was fond of her lessons, she could not tell why,
Though Dobbs rather thought it was all in her eye.

And so they went on for some months. When, at length—
The confluent forces still gathering strength—
A crisis came on like a cannon's explosion,
That left Dobbs's household in quite a commotion.

In fact, so astonished was old Dobbs himself
When his dream was all smashed like a piece of new delf,
And scattered in fragments and splinters before him,
He could not exactly tell what had come o'er him.

All he knew was, some dreadful catastrophe hung
O'er his head like a cask rather loose in the bung,
While the least move he makes he imagines it vents
In a gush o'er his person its nameless contents.

The fact is, the devil in his coils had so wound him
With crosses, confusions, contradictions, around him,
There was one only issue this act would admit,
Howsoe'er the play ended—Anne's bolt off to wit.

IV.

Dobbs had dined on that day, while the crisis yet pends,
With Corkem and Bungem, two wine-dealing friends,
Who had just got on stock some such splendid champagne
The like Dobbs might ne'er have the chance of again.

So Dobbs took a friend, a pre-eminent judge
Of wine, up to all sorts of wine-dealing fudge,
With this understanding: if his friend praised the wine,
Dobbs would know it was bad, and politely decline;

But if, on the contrary, smacking his lips,
His friend were to hesitate each time he sips,
And seem more disposed to condemn and to slight,
Then Dobbs was to know that the wine was all right.

Now this friend was a gentleman, smart for the time,
Engaged to both parties,—no very great crime;
For Corkem and Bungem both quite understood
He would praise their bad wine and disparage their good.

Their object of course we all quite understand
Was to sell both their wine and their friend Dobbs off hand;
But the end of it all, if the truth may be told,
Was that Corkem and Bungem were quietly sold.

But one small result of this cross coalition
Was a great deal of tasting to attain a decision;
And each time he tasted Dobbs grew more vainglorious,
O'er Corkem and Bungem so slyly victorious.

He became, ere they parted, decidedly sprung,
Addressing his friends as "old Cork" and "old Bung";
With other vagaries such as now and again
Froth off from the fancy when charged with champagne.

At seven he declared it was getting so late
He must now be off. He got home about eight;
And Anne with her copy-book came in at nine,
While Dobbs was yet fresh with the fumes of the wine.

So she was sat writing, and he was sat next;
And his eyes on her face were so steadfastly fixed
She dared not look up; but the mantling flush rose
Through her cheek, chin, and forehead, and delicate nose.

But still Dobbs's eyes on her face were so fix'd,
She did not know what might be happening next;
When he drew a great breath and he said with a sigh;
Oh, Anne, do you love me? and paused for reply.

But Anne was so fluttered with such a strange caper,
She dropped a great blot from her pen on the paper;
And then as they snatched at the blotting-sheet both,
They upset the inkstand and all on the cloth.

Now Dobbs had the back of his chair to the table,
And sprang up alertly; but not being able
To catch his true balance, fell back again straight,
Upsetting chair, table, and all, with his weight.

And as he upset chair and table, he tried
To recover by thrusting them all on one side;
And partly did do so, but not quite enough,
And was staggering still when Anne caught at his cuff.

She slightly laid hold and delayed his descent,
Though still to the floor he was certainly bent;
And then in the impulse to save himself harm,
Old Dobbs inadvertently caught at Anne's arm.

He caught at her arm, and then in his haste,
To save himself falling, got hold of her waist;
But the end of it all was—two seconds or more—
Being still out of balance—both fell on the floor.

V.

Ah, Dobbs, here's the devil at his dodges again,
Why would you go dining and drinking champagne?
Coming home to upset chairs and tables and all,
And then on the floor with your housemaid to fall!

All Dumbledom, horror-struck, could they but speak,
Would in sackcloth and ashes repent for a week;
All Dumbledom, wailing, lamenting, would tell
How their idol succumbed to the princes of hell.

Their idol for years, whom they worshipped and loved,
Like an engine that's shunted aside would be shoved,
With a crack in its casing, a flaw in its copper—
Indeed, Mr. Dobbs, it was very improper.

A man of your years, and a girl of Anne's age,
Performing a farce would be hissed on the stage;
For Anne in her falling—now reader, I beg
You will not take alarm—showed half of her leg.

And such a sweet leg, too, just half of it seen,
And stockings so white—they were bleached on the green ;
And the small polished slipper encasing the foot—
Ah, Dobbs, you're a rascal and humbug to boot.

And there lay old Dobbs on his elbow supported,
Half-balanced, half-meeting the fall he still courted ;
And there lay poor Anne too, so fixed that she could not
Make an effort to rise, or dared not, or would not.

So Dobbs made an effort to get on his knees,
For the purpose of rising to give Anne release
From his presence, in such an unseemly position
For a man of his standing, fair fame, and condition.

But the shock to his nerves, and the champagne together,
And the glimpse of Anne's leg too—I cannot tell whether,
Such an effort he made, with so ill-judged a grace,
He was near toppling over again on his face.

So just to be saved from this forward declension,
And get up again quickly—which was his intention,
He was forced in a manner—so awkwardly placed,
To lean for a moment his hand on Anne's waist.

And somehow—he could not account for the feeling,
A strange sweet attraction, all over him stealing,
Drew his lips so to Anne's lips—a justice of peace !—
He actually did then—he gave her a kiss.

Then came the explosion. With one sudden jerk
Anne got on her knee, and, a moment's more work,
With a push she repelled the insidious attack,
And laid poor old Dobbs on the flat of his back.

Then light as a deer to her feet she upsprang,
And door closed on door, with a clash and a bang
That shook the whole house; while, with dismal dismay,
Dobbs heard the last locked where he petrified lay.

Next morning Anne bolted off by the first train,
Determined she ne'er would see old Dobbs again;
All her maidenly modesty ruffled and shrinking
To imagine whatever old Dobbs could be thinking.

Of course there was wonderment why she was gone;
But nothing was told, and so nothing was known,
Till after a time, in the course of events,
The whole truth comes out, which there's nothing prevents.

As for Dobbs, he lay long in astonishment fixed,
In which cold apprehension was much intermixed
With a vague sort of feeling of something begun,
That the devil could only tell when 'twould be done.

VI.

In the age we now live in we've come to that pass,
A man of true wisdom looks just like an ass;
And cunning so constantly now is the rule,
A straightforward fellow's considered a fool.

But the fact lies in this—of the two major classes,
'Tis the asses who think that the wise men are asses;
And the fools who with cunning perplex their own brains,
Think the true man a fool for his plodding and pains.

But the wise man and true has a stake in the game
Beyond the mere chances of wealth and of fame;
Not the world nor its ways, but the god in his heart
Gives the mandate from which he would never depart.

For the wise man and true, by his own moral strength,
Despises the devil, whom he conquers at length;
But he who appeals to the world as his guide,
Goes into hell's harness that the devil may ride.

If our wise men and true be now all dead and gone,
Never doubt but a fresh crop are coming anon;
But meantime the devil getting much his own way,
Of course his retainers are dashing and gay.

Getting money-bills passed so uncommonly slick,
What's gotten so easy's got rid of as quick;
Though 'tis not the amount that one cares to complain of,
But the work is neglected though millions they drain off.

When they make up a bill, and we pay off the score,
All they think of is how they can make the next more;
So that government seem to have only one maxim—
If the people will pay they are ready to tax 'em.

'Tis a farce too outrageous to play in daylight,
So they run it on now to all hours of the night;
And each point that's made you are told that thereafter,
The house then went off in explosions of laughter.

I've heard of hyenas that laughed in the night—
A joke that a traveller perspired at with fright;
But if wise legislators do too much at that,
Small chance for the people to laugh and grow fat.

But the fact of the matter, nor more is nor less,
The chance for the people is the rulers' excess;
When shameless extravagance goes so ahead,
None but madmen or fools will be leaders or led.

Or in other words thus—when the devil gets the lead
His career is a short one; of that take good heed.
For nothing goes right when the devil interferes;
A thing he's been doing too much of late years.

Whereof this small history of Dobbs and his doings
Is a slight illustration; whose hidden construings,
Their drift and significance, here we may mention,
To avoid misconceiving the author's intention.

'Tis its purpose to show what the devil may and can
With a man like old Dobbs—a respectable man
In the eyes of the world; though as cold and as sordid
In his heart as the gold he had gathered and hoarded.

His passion was fierce and self-maddened desire,
Unredeemed with one spark of the hallowing fire
Which had else made it holy, and taught him the glow
Of a gladness such love as his never can know.

Else, why do such sordid and sensual desires
Still burn unappeased with unquenchable fires?
A seeking, but finding not—still onward led;
A hunger still craving—that never is fed.

VII.

Old Dobbs had a cousin, in kindly condition,
A widow well off, and a strong politician;
Who hitherto rather had kept at a distance,
As hardly acknowledging Dobbs's existence.

But Dumbledom being a nice little borough,
And Dobbs a staunch churchman believing and thorough,
As a secret ambassadress from the great nobs,
This lady came down on a visit to Dobbs.

The member for Dumbledom having fallen ill,
A rumour got up that a man with a mill—
A horrid dissenter—with money in hand,
Was canvassing now, and preparing to stand.

So the old country party was up and alert,
And Dobbs being a man of the suitable sort,
This lady ambassadress came on a mission
To stir up the seeds of his latent ambition.

Dobbs had half an idea that if he got in,
She might have an eye to his person and tin;
Condescending through him to enjoying for life,
The eclat of a member of parliament's wife.

But his heart was engaged—ah, little he knew
That she had a previous tenderness too;
A gallant young soldier, all whisker and frown,
And the clanking of spurs as he strode up and down.

Dobbs kept his own counsel, and wise and discreet,
When the lady was gracious, why, he would be sweet;
But as for aught further—when he was M. P.,
What came after that—after that we should see.

The fact is that Dobbs was a fellow who stood
By his massive inertia in many points good;
When, had he had action as quick as his wish,
The devil might have hooked him as dead as a fish.

'Twas his lumbering slowness in working out evil
He would have got into—saved him from the devil;
And the very same slowness, when all was prepared,
Made him in the end the more certainly snared.

When his mind got in motion, his passion would roll,
Like a rock down a mountain, defying control;
While its own weight at first was a means to prevent
The power that provoked its tremendous descent.

Mrs. Markham had been there a fortnight or so,
Dobbs's membership scheme getting quite on the go;
The voters being mostly a placable sort,
Who looked on elections as capital sport.

A body of freemen belonged to the town,
Whose practice of liberty rather pulls down
Patriotic, romantic, political notions,
That always somehow issue out in commotions.

So it seemed pretty clear if their member did die,
Mr. Dobbs might walk in if he would but apply
Those magical means which the agent condenses
In one mystic item—election expenses.

But as the old member had not made his mind up
Of his earthly career yet to make the last wind up,
They were all on the pause—Dobbs gallanting about
His fair lady cousin, while they yet were in doubt.

And this occupation gave his thoughts a new tack,
That broke off the strangeness of Anne's coming back;
Which followed so close, the plan might have been laid,
With the purpose of throwing Anne quite in the shade.

VIII.

And that of all things is what women can't bear
At the hands of another as young and as fair;
And though Mrs. Markham was older than Anne—
A widow is more than a match for a man.

A widower only can fairly engage
With a mettlesome widow of suitable age;
For they carry on courtship so coolly and steady—
The fact is, they both feel half-married already.

But Anne, as a whimsical woman will do,
Retiring the further the more you pursue,
The more Dobbs would marry, the more she can't think;
And the more he might press her, the more she would shrink.

And perhaps, too, she felt so secure of his heart,
She thought she would hold just a little apart
To prove his affection; which backwardness warms
Much more than too free a surrender of charms.

And now by the Prince of all Mischief's direction,
Dobbs seemed quite to cool from his former affection;
While Anne in her haughty supremacy felt
The more he grew colder, the more she could melt.

And so in vexation she wept to herself,
To be laid by so coolly by Dobbs on the shelf;
Though in fact he obeyed her command to the letter,
Which forbade him to think that he ever could get her.

For there's nothing like letting things prove their own merits,
To perplex and put out contradictory spirits;
And if man over woman would ever prove victor,
He has nothing to do but to not contradict her.

But one day it happened, when the grass being wet,
Made Anne hold her crinoline well up, she met
Old Dobbs unexpectedly; quite, I am sure,
For she dropped it at once and looked very demure.

And Anne would have passed on, but Dobbs gave a sigh,
As he wished in his heart that grass never was dry,
And addressed her: "Ah, why did you tell me to never
Speak a word on a subject I think of for ever?

"Ah, how could you check so devotion that hung
On the glance of your eye, on the trip of your tongue;
Devotion that made me, a doating old man,
Live only to love you; ah, hardhearted Anne?"

To which Anne answered: "Nay, sir, you've taught me too well
What woman's heart is; and I dare not half tell
What it feels; for I dare not believe after all,
I should ever be mistress of Dumbledom Hall.

"Perhaps in the warmth of the moment you meant it,
But who can say what might arise to prevent it;
And therefore I think it were better that we
Should remain as we are, sir, if that may well be."

And so she went off—leaving Dobbs in the lurch,
But still half-consenting to go to the church;
When somehow the devil put such thoughts in his head,
Dobbs's fancy through all sorts of dreaming was led.

But still the predominant image appears
Of Anne with her starry eyes gleaming through tears,
Her quivering lips, every breath that she drew,
And her voice with emotion all tremulous too.

With his hand on her shoulder he thought how they stood,
When somehow that glimpse of her leg would intrude;
Then with a great sigh, and a heave of the heart,
Old Dobbs would—like Byron—awake with a start.

IX.

When Dobbs had so tenderly spoken to Anne,
In the feelings of both a revulsion began;
For while Anne was quite pleased with the tender expression,
Dobbs thought he was foolish to make the confession.

And certainly, set aside all false pretences,
The more a man loves, he's the less in his senses;
But then 'tis a madness so subtle and fine,
Common sense must give way to this passion divine.

The progress of love, when the passion gets hold,
Is an ebbing and flowing of heat and of cold;
In the fever your idol engrosses you wholly,
But when the chill comes you're surprised at your folly.

But a case of true love by the fever's returns
Like fuel fresh kindled grows hot as it burns;
And then one great passion, despising all doubt,
Consumes you until it—consumes itself out.

Now Dobbs in his fit of the chill chanced to think
Of the first Mrs. Dobbs—and a little to shrink
From the thought of a second—and he could not tell why,
But the tear for a moment would start to his eye.

Yet it was but a moment—and, like Eve in the garden,
Soon the tempter wins over the love-sick churchwarden;
And the one only issue could come of it all
Did not now take a very long time to befall.

In Dobbs's grounds Anne had a favourite walk,
With a bower, and a seat, where two people might talk
In a very snug way over matters relating
To things which involve a good deal of debating.

And it so happened lately that Dobbs had found out,
That a stroll in the evening is good for the gout;
And as this same walk kept one's feet from the dew,
Dobbs would find himself there inadvertently too.

And so on a close sultry evening in June,
The moon was just rising—we must have the moon—
Dobbs was taking his stroll as preventive of gout,
And Anne for a breath of cool air had come out.

And she sat in her bower, and she gazed at the moon;
And her legs were stretched out with her neat little shoon
Just before Dobbs's eyes as he sauntered along,
Like Philander or Strephon in the amorous song.

Then Dobbs looking up too, remarked, with a sigh:
"She is just like ourselves, Anne, that moon in the sky;
At one time she smiles on us full in the face,
And next week neither her nor her smile can we trace."

"But then in a month the moon smiles, sir, again,
As constant as ever."—"That's not very plain;
If continually shifting be constancy, Anne,
Then what is inconstancy: tell, if you can?"

"Inconstancy, sir, I should say, would be this,
That a lover should one time half die for a kiss,
And then keep away for a fortnight or more,
When he might for the trying have got half-a-score."

Then Dobbs looked at Anne with a dull glaring eye,
And his huge chest was heaved with a short sudden sigh;
The tremour of passion pervaded his frame,
And a sense of suffusion all over him came.

Like a fool half his age, this old churchwarden warms
As he clasps Anne again and again in his arms,
And kissed her such kisses as youth only knows,
Or the passion of age that as fervidly glows.

X.

It had happened of late as Anne walked to this bower,
She had met a tall soldier, who—smit by the power
Of her charms—always graciously bowed to the beauty,
Yet with perfect respect—like a soldier on duty.

And it happened one evening that Dobbs had gone out
With his fair lady cousin on a visit about,
This soldier walked up to the door of the hall,
On this very lady with purpose to call.

And Anne with her bonnet on, just passing through,
Met him full in the face; and so what did she do,
But asked him to wait till the lady came back;
When he said he would stroll through the grounds for a walk.

Then the devil being alert, he persuaded poor Anne
That she ought in politeness to show this strange man
Through the grounds and the gardens and greenhouses too,
Which of course he was very much pleased she should do.

And being himself quite a fair sample man,
He was charmed with the frankness and freedom of Anne;
And he thought in her station he could not do less
When they got to the bower than just give her a kiss.

It was more in mere nonsense than purpose or art—
To be with so fair a young creature apart;
The house seemed so pleasant, a place one could pop in,
He would knock at the door just in case it would open.

But somehow Anne's innocent freedom unacted,
Repelled him as much as her beauty attracted;
Till the devil suggested the thought in his heart—
Most artless appearance, most consummate art.

No matter, he caught her ere she was aware,
In the bower where they sat, and he held her down there,
And kissed her—at least he had got half-a-dozen,
When who should step up but old Dobbs and his cousin.

And of all the four elements ever were met,
Sure four such so statue-like never were set;
For the soldier fell back on his seat, while his eyes
On the fair Mrs. Markham glared blank with surprise.

And she in astonishment fixed, could but stare
In equal surprise on the petrified pair;
While Dobbs, still more petrified even, stood fixed
Like a statue of wonder and jealousy mixed.

Then Anne looked at Dobbs, and so conscious and caught
She felt then, she bolted at once from the spot;
And then Mrs. Markham, afraid of a scene,
Drew off Mr. Dobbs ere a word passed between.

And then the tall soldier retired from the field,
A little abashed, though disdaining to yield;
His retreat all in silence he very soon made,
Half afraid of an ambush or of being waylaid.

Mrs. Markham remarked how disturbed old Dobbs was,
Though completely at fault to imagine a cause;
But conscious herself she was as much disturbed,
Her desire to know all was distressingly curbed.

And Dobbs with this soldier as utterly puzzled,
Was obliged to keep his mouth as quietly muzzled;
And never, I'm certain, before then or since,
Did a quartette so meeting so strangely all wince.

Though each found occasion for grievance, yet each
Stood equally petrified, past power of speech;
For the devil had them all so involved in his net,
Each feared to speak out where so many were met.

CANTO SECOND.

I.

The case then was this: Mrs. Markham being older
Some years, rather jealously watched her gay soldier;
And so, as well might be, was rather put out
To see what her soldier and Anne were about;

While her gallant felt conscious that each random kiss
Was impediment just to connubial bliss;
And would in his heart at this point of the game,
Have as soon seen the devil pop up there as his dame.

And Dobbs having just as he thought made all square
With his Anne, was confounded to see her sat there,
In the arms of a soldier so gallant and stately,
In the bower where himself he had kissed her so lately;

But as yet being disposed to keep snug if he can
The love that he felt for his beautiful Anne,
He jealously gulped down his fear and his doubt
And sneaked—like a dog with his tail trod on—out.

Now the devil was alert as you may be aware,
To make his own out of so strange an affair;
So he put in Dobbs' head that, his Anne after all
Was unfit to be mistress of Dumbledom Hall.

But as Dobbs's existence depended on Anne,
He more now than ever was puzzled, poor man;
For the devil had his claw deeper in than old Dobbs
Imagined, with all his heart's passionate throbs.

And had not Mrs. Markham got slightly aware
Of how the case stood, and exerted her care
To unlock the strange fix on which all now depended,
No mortal can tell how the thing might have ended.

For she had no fancy her gay martial lover
Should round the fair Anne like a butterfly hover;
And if Dobbs had a fancy to make her his wife,
She judged then that Anne would be settled for life.

And equally clear to her mind it was shown
That her gallant Lothario would then be her own;
And she hold his heart as her pleasure and duty
By the double attractions of riches and beauty.

A very fine scheme, could it be but worked out,
As, if it all goes well, it may be, no doubt;
But the chance is as great, that the issue will prove,
How proverbially rough is the course of true love.

For the devil's too important an agent in human
Affairs—more especially where there's a woman;
And if you have two—and two men to hold tight—
'Tis a very fine scheme that will keep them all right.

But not to throw doubts on the haps and the chances
Of this the most truthful of modern romances,
Let the tale tell itself as the facts are unfolded,
And then there's no need that the author be scolded.

Mr. Dobbs being jealous and doubtful of Anne,
Mrs. Markham by tact, and according to plan,
Just let out some hints about her gallant lover
Whom they happened that day in the grounds to discover.

And she spoke some apology on his behalf,
Which made Mr. Dobbs rather chuckle and laugh;
Mrs. Markham so feelingly told Anne's distress,
She was sure there was some other man in the case.

Do you think so? said Dobbs. I wonder whom 'tis;
For I fancy the girl is a bit of a quiz.
Mr. Dobbs, said the lady, whom could you suppose?
Can't think, quoth old Dobbs—with his finger on nose.

II.

Now Anne being an orphan, her parents were dead,
And her uncle, the curate, was her family's head;
And in the great scale of our social plan,
A curate, though poor, 's a respectable man.

So Dobbs did divulge this great secret at last,
Half expecting to set Mrs. Markham aghast;
But she, dear kind lady, wished good luck and all
Might greet the new mistress of Dumbledom Hall.

Then Dobbs was so pleased he uncorked more champagne,
And they got into quite a congenial vein,
And mutually confiding 'twas arranged then that they
Should be married at Dumbledom all on one day.

And Sir Lionel Spark happening just then to call,
The affair was concluded, the day fixed and all;
More champagne was uncorked, and a general jollity
Supervened, not oft seen among people of quality.

The gay Mrs. Markham first making a sortie,
Sat down to discourse from the pianoforte;
And she sang such delicious old ditties, the men
Were melted and moved like two schoolboys again.

They felt all the fire, and the frolic, and fun,
Of the days when their deeds of mad mischief were done;
When away to the woods and the wild hills beyond,
They dash off in rapture that cannot despond.

Anon like the tinkling of many a bell,
The fairy-like waltz from her light fingers fell,
With soft modulations that float as they flow—
Like the tread of the dancers as they whirl and they go.

Oh, was it the power of the music he heard,
Or the champagne within him our gay soldier stirred?
But his heart was so moved as it floatingly fell,
He was rapt as he rose to that sweet music's spell.

In the whirl of the waltz he was piloting through,
Amidst chairs and tables, and gracefully too;
When the door opened gently, and Anne in her charms,
By the devil's own direction came plump in his arms.

And though he well judged it was sure to offend
Both his future fair wife and his present fat friend,
Yet, with devilment primed, he caught hold, nothing loth,
Of Anne for a waltz, in defiance of both.

Which waltzing old Dobbs seemed not quite to enjoy,
As they once and again in their whirling swept by;
When the music died off, and the waltzing was stopped,
And Anne being giddy, in Dobbs's lap dropped.

Not on purpose, of course; but it happened just where
They stopped when the music died off, he was there;
And then nothing would suit him—the doating old fool,
But that he too must waltz, like a boy out of school.

With a porpoise-like pirouette, and an elephant's skips,
One hand on Anne's shoulder, and three finger tips
Of Anne's on some part of him—never mind where,
They are sailing and whirling away through the air.

With the swell of the music they rise and they fall,
As likewise the floor did, and furniture all;
When a lap of the carpet caught Dobbs's boot toe,
And away, with a heavy smash, down he must go.

Through a chiffonnier panel of silvered plate glass
He crashed with his shoulder—the tipsy old ass—
And smashed it to fragments, so heavily struck he;
While Anne cried half heart broke—it was so unlucky.

III.

Oh, Time's greatest triumph! oh, Life's dearest dream!
When we float into Eden on the glittering stream;
Perennial enchantment! most magical thrill!
A wedding somehow has an interest still.

With the bridesmaids approaching so stately and tall,
And the brides in their beauty outshining them all;
And the soft glow of sunlight bursting out to adorn
The aisles of the church on that festival morn.

Where the fair blooming faces that crowd to the joy,
Beam back their heart's gladness they cannot tell why;
Oh, who would not live through a life of despair
To stand by the side of that dear angel there?

To hear her soft accents so solemnly vow
She is thine and thine only for ever from now;
Oh, who would not weep then with ecstasy's tears,
Looking down the long vista of glad future years?

Anne wept a few tears; Mrs. Markham too, tried;
With her handkerchief ready she soon got them dried;
But Dobbs's ecstatics did not tend that way,
Nor Sir Lionel's either—being both rather gay.

Their plan was to start in two opposite ways,
Each pair to be off about so many days;
And then, as the honeymoon waned, they were all
To meet for a few days at Dumbledom Hall.

For Dobbs only cast yet a dubious eye on all
These sudden collisions of Anne and Sir Lionel;
But as they came quite in a casual way,
Whatever he thought he had nothing to say.

The soft satisfaction that Dobbs's eyes beamed,
Showed a hope realised that his heart had long dreamed;
While the calm philosophic abstraction that shone
In Sir Lionel's dreamed of the days that were gone.

For Sir Lionel felt that peculiar state
Of devil-me-care and defiance of fate;
Having compassed an object for which he had striven,
He cared not so much for success when 'twas given.

Her style and appearance being handsome and gay,
He loved his new wife in a sort of a way;
But over her power now the softer attraction
Of Anne was unconsciously causing distraction.

He would not entertain for a moment the thought
Of injuring Dobbs; but a feeling still wrought,
That did make Sir Lionel peculiarly enjoy
Any joke that made jealous the love-sick old boy.

He stood by the horses and phaeton apart,
Where the new Mrs. Dobbs was all ready to start,
When all of a sudden, with a snort and a cough,
The horses took fright, and they both bolted off.

Then Mrs. Dobbs shrieked, and Sir Lionel ran
To stop them, but finding 'tis more than he can,
He jumped nimbly in, and away they went rattling,
He leaned o'er the horses, to hold them still battling.

All this in a very few seconds was done,
Old Dobbs not at all entering into the fun;
Enraged and incensed as they rattled away—
Such a trick to be played on a man's marriage-day!

To stand like a fool there, Dobbs could not abide,
So he turned to the carriage that held his friend's bride;
And she being seated, he jumped in as well,
And after Sir Lionel rattled pell-mell.

IV.

The road from the hall was an avenue wide,
With beeches and elms in a row on each side,
With a gate at the end, a good mile from the hall,
With massive stone gate-posts that finished the wall.

Devoutly Dobbs wished that the gate might be closed,
But alas! 'twas wide open—as may be supposed,
With the half of old Dumbledom outside the gate
All waiting to see them drive off in full state.

Dobbs was half down the avenue, rating his stars,
When he saw the first phaeton sweep past the white bars;
And he trembled with rage when he heard the mob shout
As his bride and Sir Lionel bowled away out.

When the people saw who were the pair that first went,
They were puzzled extremely to know what it meant;
The old folks declared it the strangest of jobs,
That Spark should be driving the new Mrs. Dobbs.

But astonishment took more astonishing courses,
When the furious Dobbs came up flogging his horses,
And shouts like a madman aloud in their ear,
Ten pounds to the first that will stop their career.

Then flashed on their senses a gleam of the truth,
Like electric fire, stirring age, manhood, and youth;
And away went all Dumbledom, rabble and rout,
Some to run for the prize, some to see the joke out.

The station was six miles from Dumbledom town,
The road made a circuit inclined slightly down;
And it happened just then, that the bend of its sweep
Was filled from the fair with a whole sea of sheep.

The sheep were so crowded and huddled at bay,
Sir Lionel's horses were stopped on their way;
While Dobbs, with the Dumbledom rabble run from it,
Rolled on in his rage—like a draggle-tailed comet.

Sir Lionel's horses wade on through the sheep,
And Dobbs and his retinue after them creep;
When just as they're meeting, round the hill trotted forth
A squadron of horse on their way to the north.

Now Dobbs in his high wrath had muttered and sworn
Revenge for this insult should amply be borne;
With savage conceptions so fiercely engrossed,
A blunderbuss duel he had fancied the most.

But what with the slow pace at which they now creep,
And what with the clamour kept up by the sheep,
And the rabble looking on, and the soldiers last come,
Dobbs seemed in his anger struck utterly dumb.

The bottled-up phrensy might flash from his eyes
As he cursed this imbroglio of rabble and noise;
But whatever the vengeance his rage would not spare,
He had sense enough left not to seek for it there.

With a certain dumb dignity waving his hand,
He stood by the phaeton side, now at a stand,
The horses' heads held by the scum of the town,
And he said to Sir Lionel: "Come down, sir, come down."

And there was that writ on his face as he spoke,
Sir Lionel did not much care to provoke;
So Dobbs took his place—gave the horses the whip;
But the rabble still held by the reins in their grip.

"How now," said old Dobbs; and they jeered back, "How now;
'Tis the ten pounds we've earned—and we'll have it somehow."
"Is that all," said Dobbs, "it had slipped from my mind;"
So he pulled out his purse and he flung it behind.

V.

Too glad to get off, Dobbs was now pushing on
Past the soldiers, whose critical aptness was shown
By the various aspects in which they descried
The infuriate Dobbs and his beautiful bride.

Some thought 'twas his wife, some thought 'twas his daughter,
Some thought that eloping he just then had caught her;
Some thought 'twas a fight, some thought 'twas a fair;
But every one wondered what was to do there.

Then said Dobbs to his wife, a remark rather pat,
'Twas the foulest of fairs he had ever been at;
But he hoped that the next time they held such another,
Sir Lionel's jests would spark off on some other.

He never knew horses yet snort so and cough
As theirs did that morning before they set off;
Nor after the heat of their fury was past,
Get into so sheepish a trot at the last.

When they got to the station, old Dobbs still suspected
Some trick had been played, though he could not detect it;
He examined his horses, both their heads and their tails,
But all his inspection for nothing avails.

He half thought of waiting to kick up a row
When Sir Lionel came—as the case would allow;
But decided at last to postpone it at present,
Having business on hand that was rather more pleasant.

All their traps had been stowed, so they got to their train
In a God-be-thanked state of the nerves and the brain;
For after the broils and imbroglio past,
The repose of the coupé was welcome at last.

And when they shot forth from the station at length,
With the whistle and hiss of the steam in its strength,
Dobbs felt with a calm satisfaction of mind
How they left Captain Spark and his mischief behind.

Through cuttings, o'er embankments, they flashed on their way,
Spitting sparks, puffing steam, in a streamer so gay;
Its dark shadow danced on the green growing bank,
Keeping time to the engine's incessant clank, clank.

Some fifty miles forward they stopped and they dined,
Old Dobbs getting more and more jolly in mind;
The refreshment imbibed so promoting elation,
He had no clear distinction of station from station.

Of the sum of his hopes having now full possession,
Whitherever they went it was joyous progression;
So he smiled with a wink the most placid and knowing
To impertinent questions of where they were going.

Mrs. Dobbs in her innocence thought it all right,
Though they travelled all day, and they travelled all night;
'Twas her first marriage-day—her new life just begun—
So she thought 'twas the way that it always was done.

She submitted to Dobbs as he hugged her and kissed her
As quietly just as he had been her sister;
She thought he looked hazy and queer in his eyes,
And was rather ambiguous in his replies.

She thought that the guards rather smiled when they saw
The equivocal state of her husband-by-law;
But knowing that Dobbs had been married before,
She thought it was right that he should sit and snore.

So at last at a station a porter threw wide
The door of the carriage, and stood at the side,
And remarked to another, who passed with a trunk,
"There's a gentleman here who appears to be drunk."

VI.

Mr. Dobbs, with his head hanging down on his chest,
As if he was anxiously smelling his vest,
Looked up with his eyes rather hazy and queer,
And declared he intended to spend the night here.

He meant in the carriage—but the guard gave a shout
For a cab, and old Dobbs getting soon bundled out,
Requested they'd drive him to Dumbledom Hall,
Which the cabman declared that he knew not at all;

"Then go to hotel;" but the word Dobbs so mumbled
It sounded like hell. Then he muttered and grumbled:
"You cabmen, you can't be half up to your jobs,
If you do not know me,—I'm Sennacherib Dobbs.

"And this is my wife; we've been married to-day,
So drive's to hotel, and tell's what is to pay:
The Green Bear—or Blue Boar—Red Lion—wherever
The wine's pretty good, and the waiters are clever."

The Red Lioness came to the door of her den
All smiles and politeness, and Dobbs being then
To a parlour assisted, on a sofa down sat,
With most hazy perceptions of what he'd be at.

He had a vague feeling of something attained,
Though what was the point he precisely had gained
He could not just catch. So, to clear up the matter,
He rung and he ordered hot brandy and water.

And by that inspired, and his wife's gentle beauty,
He came to a vague sort of sense of his duty;
So he got in his two hands the hands of his wife,
And remarked: "This is happiest day of my life.

"Let's always be example the one to the other;
Sobriety; consideration; like sister and brother.
Let's be mutually helpful; hide each other's failings,
Each watch over each in affliction or ailings.

"Let the wife know her place; let the husband know his;
Be moderate in all things, whatever it is;
So here's our long happiness, dear wife, and whether
Or not—consolation—we're always together.

"So now you'll retire. I will just take a swig,
As I feel rather sickly and faint with fatigue.
I wonder what Spark and his wife are about;
I hope they are happy. They are happy, no doubt.

"He's a mischievous fellow. I'll serve him out yet.
You might both have been killed; have left us to fret—
Inconsolable widow and widower. Yes;
It was Providence sent all those sheep—nothing less."

Then the tide of his eloquence ebbing again,
And the brandy and water oppressing his brain,
'Twas in vain Dobbs kept trying and trying to keep
His dull eyes from closing and closing in sleep.

Then the Lioness seeing how matters now stand,
Mr. Dobbs was removed by two waiters off hand;
Put to bed by himself, where he lustily snored
Loud enough to be heard through an inch-and-half board.

And the new Mrs. Dobbs, too, retired, wearied out
With the long day's fatigue—somewhat puzzled no doubt
At this phasis of marriage—love, once so adoring,
Through the wall now so unsentimentally snoring.

No doubt 'twas the devil interfering again,
Tripping up poor old Dobbs by his love of champagne;
So making the dream of his long-cherished joys
To melt from his grasp when he clutches the prize.

VII.

Some hour towards morning, in a half-dreaming state,
Dobbs heard a great row—an exceedingly great
And tremendous commotion, a thumping and pounding,
Had he not been half-drunk, to his nerves quite astounding.

But his sleep was so heavy, his senses so dead,
It just made him drowsily lift up his head,
And his eyes by great effort for one moment ope,
Then he dropped off asleep when the great row would stop.

Which it did, and began afresh, once and again,
With a great sound of splattering and rushing of rain;
And by-and-bye dancing and blazing of light,
Like sunshine would dazzle in the depth of the night.

Then the quick rattling crashes shook the house to its crown,
Like ten thousand truck-loads of rocks hurling down,
Whose rumbling and tumbling concludes in one bump,
That made Dobbs from his bed in astonishment jump.

Then the drowsy conviction was forced on his senses,
'Twas a thunderstorm raging. And no false pretences
That thunderstorm made to the well-earned name;
For the like there before, or since then, never came.

The oldest inhabitant, time-honoured sage,
Felt quite like a fool to hear such thunder rage;
For he never remembered, no not since a child,
A night of commotion so awful and wild.

But when Dobbs found the end of the house in its place,
And the windows secure, and felt for his face,
And his body all right, he was quite glad to think
That the Dobbses were not then and there gone extinct.

For if in that turmoil the earth had been split
And blown into small planets, or comets to flit
In astonishing orbits, Dobbs would not have wondered—
So terribly—awfully—loudly it thundered.

This storm having roared with so ample a grace,
Dobbs hoped it would now go to some other place;
So he got into bed and was soon snoring deep,
All the same as if nothing had happened—asleep.

And he dreamt in due time—he could not be mistaken—
That the cook in the kitchen was frizzling bacon,
Which bacon so crackled and spit at the fire
The noise of its frizzling rose higher and higher.

With the noise of its frizzling, the smell of its smoke
Came up, too, so strong now, Dobbs felt like to choke;
So he coughed and awoke, and he opened his eyes
On the window all blazing and crackling with noise.

He jumped out of bed in his drawers and his stockings—
They had not been pulled off—and the noises and knockings
He heard all about made all sleepers arouse—
For a stack got ablaze had set fire to the house.

'Twas the lightning had done it. Unfortunate Dobbs!
Doomed to endless disasters, 'tis the wildest of jobs.
Fly! fly! for your wife; catch her up in your arms;
And bear her away from this scene of alarms.

But where is your wife? Go, rush to the door,
Like a furious madman, and stamp on the floor
In thy impotent phrensy. The devil has you now
In the worst fix of all; I think that you'll allow.

The worst, till a worster. Looking out on the stairs,
Who heavily treads with the burden he bears?
Confusion and death! As he peers through the dark,
'Tis his wife in the arms of Sir Lionel Spark.

VIII.

"Where the devil have you come from?" said Dobbs. "Where have [you?"
Sir Lionel asked, with as good reason too;
For the place Dobbs had got to was as far from the place
They had started at first for, as the sinner from grace.

For the fact was, from dining, old Dobbs had indulged
In a reticence strict, and had never divulged
To guard, or to porter, from station to station,
The place they had fixed for the day's destination.

They had lost their two tickets after first setting out,
Which had led to their going a great way about;
For they travelled while'er they could get trains to go,
And stopped when they couldn't—being obliged to do so.

Sir Lionel Spark had been turned off his way
By a tunnel fallen in—to his lady's dismay;
So they had to travel a very great round
To arrive at the place to which first they were bound.

And so as the devil would have it they met,
Though Dobbs had indeed no occasion to fret;
For Sir Lionel gallantly risked his own life
To save from destruction old Dobbs's young wife.

'Twas some comfort to Dobbs that she had not undressed,
Though it was bad enough too to see her so pressed
By the man who had luck, by some devilish charms,
Always somehow to get Dobbs's wife in his arms.

'Twas provocative strong to a quarrel no doubt,
But Dobbs could not now get his jealousy out;
So he bottled it up—only making it brisker—
And smiles, though he hates every hair of Spark's whisker.

No matter. Sir Lionel fairly had earned
Dobbs's gratitude, and though his jealous breast burned,
'Twas arranged that the Sparks with the Dobbses should stay,
And go on some pleasure excursion that day.

So they drove out together, this time in a phaeton
Double-seated, for Dobbs vowed that no power of Satan,
By chance, or contrivance, or dreadful alarms,
Should let this fellow Spark take his wife in his arms.

They drove to a ruin, a famous old fort,
That frowned o'er the ocean. And there in their sport,
Down in dungeons, up staircases, where'er their guide
Bid them come and examine, they peered and they pryed.

And then they went out on the rocks and admired
The great round blue ocean, that advanced and retired,
With a sweep and a rustle as it shook up the pebbles
That chirruped like birds with their small piping trebles.

And then the long lash of the wave coming home,
As it burst into bubbles and sparkled in foam,
Down dashing its crest all along the white beach,
And flashing in foam far as vision can reach.

Then a ship, a magnificent ship, came in view,
With her sails bellied out gleaming white o'er the blue;
Just pitching, and heaving, and giving a lurch,
The great wooden castle, as big as a church.

"Oh, beautiful! beautiful! Mrs. Dobbs, Lady Spark,"
Was the one, and the only, incessant remark;
"Oh, beautiful! beautiful! isn't it now;"
And beautiful! beautiful! all must allow.

"But," said Dobbs, "I'm afraid, by the tide playing tricks,
We will find ourselves now in a beautiful fix;"
Then it flashed on his mind, he was short, Spark was tall—
Oh, the devil take the tide, ship, rock, castle, and all.

IX.

But what's to be done? On the rock there they stand,
With a band of blue water between them and land;
In depth 'twould take Dobbs about up to the middle,
But to get his wife over dry, that's the great riddle.

If Dobbs should himself try to carry her over,
Being stout, he might stumble and might not recover;
And besides, being short, howsoever he caught her,
The least slip he made she would souse in the water.

That clearly won't answer. Well, then, Captain Spark
Having carried her once out of fire in the dark,
One would think it would just put the thing square and right
If he carried her out of the sea in daylight.

Besides, being taller, a third of a yard,
And more actively built, it will surely go hard
But Sir Lionel will be, if Dobbs quiet can sit,
By far the more certain and safe mode of transit.

There was no getting over it. So Dobbs submits,
And with choler slow-boiling disconsolate sits,
While Sir Lionel carries Lady Spark over first
In his arms, like a baby in long clothes when nursed.

And when he took up Dobbs's lovely young wife
In his arms, 'twas a moment in Dobbs's whole life;
'Twas a terrible ordeal that act to behold,
And he certainly felt most exceedingly sold.

All the journey across he was fuming and fretting—
Sir Lionel took such a time—quite forgetting
That having another man's wife in his arms
Must make him more nervous and quick to alarms.

But the worst of it was when the shore he did reach,
He kept carrying her still up the slope of the beach,
Leaving Dobbs in impatience to stamp and to chafe,
"Put her down, put her down, she is perfectly safe."

Then Sir Lionel stalks through the water again,
And he made a proposal Dobbs could not disdain;
"Mr. Dobbs, there is no need that you get wet through,
As I've carried your wife I will carry you too."

So he took up old Dobbs like a child at the breast,
A rather well-fed one it must be confessed;
The weight might have made any stout porter grumble,
But the Captain just muttered—"By G—d, if I stumble."

And scarce had the words got well out of his lips,
When his foot under Dobbs's enormous weight slips
On some tangle or seaweed, and headlong both dash
In the water at once with a terrible splash.

The ladies on land shrieked in utter dismay,
For the husbands they loved so, ah, sure, where were they?
They were down in the green ocean's depths among crabs,
At each other's limbs making terrible grabs.

The fact was that Dobbs was so direly offended
At this piece of work, which he quite thought intended,
He turned on Sir Lionel as fierce as a bear
To drag down and drown him right off then and there.

So fierce was their struggle in the lap of the ocean,
The waters were white with the splash and commotion;
And not till exhausted and gasping for breath
Would Dobbs quit his grip like the grapple of death.

Sir Lionel at length got his footing once more
And dragged the discomfited Dobbs to the shore
In a woful condition—and none the more jolly,
That Sir Lionel laughed at his fierceness and folly.

X.

Oh, Brandy and water! what would life be without thee,
Though teetotalers turn up their noses and flout thee?
In some shape or other thine essence divine
Keeps a soul in our systems—beer, spirit, or wine!

Let them drag forth the drunkard to show thy abuse,
And harangue o'er his weakness. But what is the use?
Let the teetotal preacher so pert and so prim
Try the labourer's lot—he'll get drunker than him.

With your joints on your tables and succulent food
In daily abundance—no doubt you are good;
But drudge you—half-feed you—you'll find then, I wist,
The attractions of gin are too strong to resist.

There, there, is the plague spot! The soul is gone dead
In the once human heart. And the millions half-fed,
Trodden down in their weakness, much more than their sin,
Drown out recollection with brandy or gin.

And we all know it does get us out of the ruts,
And clears apprehension of "ifs" and of "buts";
In fact, it enables mankind to endure
The evils of life which they cannot yet cure.

For example, here's Dobbs on a pleasant excursion,
Unexpectedly suffers unpleasant immersion;
But how philosophic'lly he'll view the matter
Through the mellowing medium of brandy and water.

The first inn they came to they borrowed fresh raiment;
They offered—but the landlord would not hear of payment.
Then they drove back; and Dobbs, the unfortunate sinner,
Made amends for his grief with a jolly good dinner.

As cork after cork from the bottles still flew,
Mr. Dobbs towards evening got pretty well through;
Being just in that state that was sure to provoke
Sir Lionel Spark to some mischievous joke.

So as Dobbs became drowsy, Sir Lionel plucking
His sleeve, hoped he felt none the worse for his ducking;
And assured him that nothing would keep him all right
Like a hot bath, if taken the last thing at night.

And whether Sir Lionel planned it or not,
Mr. Dobbs by fatality, always his lot,
Was led to adventures so very peculiar,
He dreads yet to think of that *horrida mulier.*

For after the ladies retired for the night,
Mr. Dobbs had his hot bath to keep him all right;
But he fell asleep in it, and staid in so long,
As ill-luck would have it, it sent him all wrong.

He awoke all in darkness, his light burnt out—
For his shirt and his dressing-gown groping about—
He got to the passage, with a vague recollection
Of how the house lay, and his own room's direction.

And here some obscurity hangs o'er the matter
Of Dobbs's proceedings, not easy to scatter
Or penetrate into; for only by patent
And prominent facts can we guess at the latent.

Mr. Dobbs, though a good deal confused in his head
By his sleep in the bath, found his way into bed;
And remembered no more until somehow it seemed
That an old lady stood by his bedside and screamed.

He thought 'twas a nightmare, and tried to dispel
The face that would still pertinaciously dwell
With its eyes fixed on his with so frantic a glare—
He starts up—and sees—the eyes actually there!

CANTO THIRD.

I.

I would that this tale were some idle romance,
And not a true history. For then I perchance
Might suppress or might alter a scene, as occasion
Required or demanded, without condemnation.

But fettered by facts as historians are,
My duty to Dobbs and posterity bar
For a moment the thought to pervert or to palter
The inviolate fact we've no business to alter.

So I'll tell without wish to offend or to flatter,
As a matter of fact the plain fact of the matter;
And whoever takes umbrage at what I may tell,
May take himself off in the bargain as well.

The matter of fact, then, was just as I've said,
Dobbs started up wide awake half out of bed;
And he saw a tall lady with rather wild eyes,
Like a statue stood staring at him in surprise.

She seemed quite uncertain whether Dobbs was a vision
Or a matter of fact. And to get with precision
To know if he really were what he seemed,
She reached out her hand and she touched him and screamed.

Then said Dobbs in a pucker: "For Godsake, good madam,
Do not be alarmed; for of all sons of Adam
I'm a man of good morals, by the devil misled
To mistake my own room, and get in the wrong bed."

But to Dobbs's surprise the old dame seemed to dally
With the strange situation; though Dobbs with Aunt Sally
Would as soon have been flirting. In fact he was quite
In a fidget, while she seemed all love at first sight.

For the fact was, the lady was slightly insane;
Disappointment in love had unsettled her brain;
And since then her thoughts in delusion all ran
On some long-expected but still coming man.

And sleepless and restless she had risen that night
To walk through the house in the silent moonlight;
And Dobbs in the interim got in her bed
By the door being ajar—and the devil—misled.

With the lovingest look then, she sighed out: "Ah, no;
You were led here this night, sir, for more than you know.
I have dreamed of your coming, and now you are here;"
And she came round, as Dobbs thought, alarmingly near.

So he was preparing to slip out and run,
A thing he now wished he had earlier done;
But she was too quick, and before he'd half pass'd
Through the doorway she caught him and held him there fast.

"You men are such fellows, getting round us poor women;
Mistaking your bedrooms and setting us screaming."
"For Godsake, good madam, say nothing of that."
"Then give me a kiss, and I'll keep it all pat."

Unfortunate Dobbs! By the good power's connivance,
Still subject to tricks of the devil's contrivance;
By that ill-advised kiss you have kindled a fire
That will blaze rather more than you think or desire.

For he no sooner kissed her than she paid him back
With a hug in her arms and a smack for a smack;
And just at that moment he heard up above,
The housemaids unfastening their doors, on the move.

Dobbs whispers, half frantic: "Now, do let me go,
For Godsake, good madam." But she held on so—
From the shirt-rending struggle he may burst unconfined,
But, like Joseph, he leaves half his garment behind.

II.

Fly, fly, frantic Dobbs—like a buck for the brake,
For there's nothing behind thee, for decency's sake.
Fly, fly—they are coming—'tis their feet on the stair:
A pantry—a closet—get in anywhere.

Thank God, he is in now; bolt the door, make it fast;
With a heart still at gallop breathe freely at last;
Breathe softly; they're coming; hark! their feet on the floor,
They have flung down their brushes; they are at the next door.

'Tis the morning they sweep out the dusty deposit
That's continually gathering in pantry and closet;
The head-quarters whence they are making their sortie—
A recess in the passage on this side of forty.

As they rumble and rattle their brushes about,
They are working their way towards Dobbs without doubt;
Who is trembling with terror and cold apprehension
In a closet for uses there's no need to mention.

At last they are at it; they are trying the door;
Dobbs can hear them in whispers how they talk the thing o'er.
"It is fast, is it? Strange. And it sounds all so still;
If there's anyone in they are surely took ill.

"Go get George with his ladder to look in and see
By the window, whoever or what in can be;
And he'll be the witness of us all instead,
When the coroner sits, if the gentleman's dead."

No wonder old Dobbs in astonishment stares
At the business-like view that they take of affairs;
And though it may seem scarcely proper or civil,
Devoutly he wished George and them at the devil.

But what's to be done? For a very short time in
This ladder of learning George is sure to be climbing;
And, poked from his hiding place, Dobbs will at last
Be detected and laughed at for all that is past.

By the daylight now breaking, Dobbs looks round his closet
For a place where his person he might safely deposit
In hiding, until, by the passage being free,
He could steal into forty, and nobody see.

So he spies in the ceiling a trapdoor, which seems
A suitable refuge to further his schemes;
And climbing through it, first unfastening the door,
He awaits the arrival of George to explore.

Then George to the wall soon his ladder applies,
And mounts all prepared for a dreadful surprise;
And in truth he was much more surprised than he thought,
When he looked through the window and saw there was nought.

But he mounts and goes in to make sure of the fact,
While the girls, all expecting some terrible act
Of a tragical drama, assembled without,
Are confounded when George in high dudgeon walks out.

For he blows them sky high for a parcel of ——,
Playing tricks on a young fellow like himself, which is
Always civil to them. But at once they denied it,
And declared that the door had been fast when they tried it.

Did they think he would swallow such a gammoning tale?
He inquired with an oath, kicking over a pail;
When just as he did it, they heard a great crack
In the ceiling above them which made them start back.

And then in a moment a great shower of plaster,
Coming down all about them, fell faster and faster;
And the women ran terrified, screaming and squealing,
For they saw a man's legs sticking down through the ceiling.

III.

Now George was a young man exceedingly wide
Awake to humanity's whimsical side;
With a quirk in his eyes turning up at the corner,
Would screw a laugh out of a mute or a mourner.

Being "boots" at the Blue Boar, his experience of life
Was with food for his fancy exceedingly rife;
And when anything happened absurd or outré,
He was always quite ready to meet it half-way.

His eye with a joke would continually twinkle,
And his lips with the smile would perpetually wrinkle;
And when nothing occurred he could laugh at without,
With the fun he imagined he'd be laughing right out.

So when poor old Dobbs through the ceiling came down,
With white dust powdered o'er from the heel to the crown;
He looked so exceedingly grotesque a figure,
That George stood and grinned in his face like a nigger.

He grinned with astonishment, laughed with delight,
At the pitiful aspect of Dobbs in his plight,
As he stood on the floor and endeavoured to hide
The woful deficiency round his off-side.

"For Godsake, good fellow, get a rug or a cloak,
For I've met with misfortune would the devil provoke;
Let me slip down the ladder and hide in your berth,
You'll be paid for the service at ten times its worth."

Now George was not merc'nary—nought of the sort;
But his nerves fairly thrilled at this rare piece of sport;
'Twas a feast so intense for his whimsical mood,
He kept looking and laughing at Dobbs where he stood.

He said, "I will do so;" and laughing he kept on;
And he laughed every rundle of the ladder he stepped on;
He laughed in the courtyard, he laughed at the door,
And the more he would smother it, laughed but the more.

As he brought the cloak over his arm up the ladder
He stopped at the middle and laughed even madder;
When he put it on old Dobbs, so tidy and clever,
He drew up his leg and laughed more than ever.

"Oh, by gum! if I ever—'tis as good as a play—
A strange place to be in at this time of day—
Been larking, I reckon—got lost in the dark—
Ah, well; there's some life in a jolly good lark."

Dobbs's clothes were got down by a chambermaid's aid;
And both George and she getting handsomely paid,
They concluded between them that Dobbs was a rum un,
Who had slipped from his wife after some other woman.

And as such a thing is against all the laws,
They were both very curious to know who it was;
And at last they decided that it was a fair dame,
An actress, who staid at their house when she came.

So the devil thus got Dobbs into evil repute,
And blew a side blast on a lady to boot;
For she in her innocence, old Dobbs in his,
Were the subjects of many a sly-spoken quiz.

And thus 'tis the world, with its great purblind eye,
Mistakes for an elephant what's but a fly;
And thinks when an honest man looks in its face,
How marvellously rogues can put on honour's grace.

And the empty and clattering gossip of lies,
Which the wise contradict not—because they despise—
So hot for conviction, in truth so unskilled,
Would hang for a murder when there's nobody killed.

IV.

Then Dobbs getting dressed, he went out for a saunter,
Concocting some story to beat off the banter
He rather expected from Sir Lionel Spark,
Whose random shots hit often too near the mark.

Mrs. Dobbs, by good luck, slept so long and so sound,
She was quite unaware of her husband's night round;
Though she did let slip one remark hard to be parried—
Were it not for the ring she scarce knew she was married.

The fact was, old Dobbs in a kind of a spell
Was bewildered and lost; and he never could tell
What strange or perplexing occurrence would crown
The events of the day ere the sun would go down.

Events so succeeded events—and so fast—
He got in a new scrape getting out of the last;
And the new one involved such confusion and bother,
Inadvertently Dobbs was drawn into another.

And we all have experienced the same fatal spite,
When everything goes wrong and nothing goes right;
We cannot tell how, and we cannot tell why,
But the fact is a thing that we cannot deny.

No doubt 'tis the planets, the moon, or the devil;
Or some malign influence working for evil;
Or some other something, God only knows what,
That's impossible ever to clearly come at.

It seemed so provoking—a man to be married,
And the first night of all to bed drunk to be carried;
Then a thunderstorm bursts, and the house gets a-fire,
And one general row seems at once to transpire.

Then the ducking, the bath, and the night's misadventures,
When Dobbs the wrong room inadvertently enters;
The subsequent sorrows, and the final disaster,
The sans culotte Dobbs dropping down through the plaster.

If these be the sermon with pleasure for text,
We may ask with astonishment what will come next?
And when will this string of successive vexations
Be resolved from the coil of its strange complications?

When, in fact, will old Dobbs have his dream realised?
The dream of delight he so preciously prized;
The sun and the centre of life's grand to-be;
The one thing he wanted? Read on and you'll see.

Dobbs resolved, as he sauntered, to avoid too much wine,
Which, when he had nothing to do but to dine,
He was apt to indulge in, especially champagne,
On a pleasure excursion, when quite in the vein.

When he set out on pleasure, and business was dropped,
He got on so fast he could hardly be stopped;
And so, ere he knew, while he felt all so fine,
He would take the wrong points and be over the line.

And habits, like points, lead so gradually in,
You can't tell exactly when bad ones begin;
And you're ever so much off your course and astray,
While you think you went always in this sort of way.

Then the devil has his pointsmen along life's great line,
Always ready to lead down some pleasant incline;
With gradients so easy—forgetting to tell
That the terminus station you'll get to—is hell.

First gently and easily led into wrong,
Then headlong and reckless you thunder along;
Anon, in the distance, descrying afar
The true danger-signal—the baleful red star.

V.

The longer you live and the wider you wake,
The less is the quantum of gammon you'll take;
From which it appears, had you time so to do,
You might live till you saw the world quite through and through.

Civilisation, education, what can it all be
But blind-born puppies that are getting to see;
And then they quit scrambling and fighting for paps—
If there chance be as many as puppies perhaps.

'Tis the froward young puppies who don't know they're blind
Are the hardest to deal with, whatever their kind;
For having no eyes for their own illustration,
They think they engross all the eyes of creation.

And of all the young puppies that ever came out,
The prince of the race now came forward, no doubt,
And addressing old Dobbs: "Mr. Dobbs, I presume;"
He shook out a handkerchief rank with perfume.

"I am so glad to see you—of course you know me;
My sister and Spark—ah—have come here, I see;
You have married your housemaid—ah—Dobbs, I suppose;
Ah—a very sweet girl, with a beautiful nose.

"And her eyes—I am always so fond of fine eyes;
Ah—Dobbs, if you're here a few days, I will prize
Your acquaintance exceedingly—ah—Dobbs, good day;
You'll be at the review with your wife, I daresay."

Dobbs could not have looked more astonished and lost
If a ghost had his path unexpectedly crost
Than he did—though he felt rather more in a passion,
As he eyed o'er this flower of refinement and fashion.

Some years back he knew him a lad at the school,
Now burst in full blossom an empty-brained fool;
An exquisite, oh, so exceedingly fine,
He imagined the ladies all thought him divine.

So the next of it was this Adonis Leroux,
With Dobbs's young wife, coming out for a view
Of the hills, at the back of the house, so magnificent,
Puffing smoke, with ah—ah—interspersed, every whiff he sent.

And the innocent sweetness of the new Mrs. Dobbs
As she hung on the arm of this prince of all snobs,
Told Dobbs what a source of confusion unknown is
The silly conceit of his cousin Adonis.

Captain Spark was a man, but this fellow's a fool,
A jackanapes monkey, a puppy from school;
But just by that fact the more likely to breed
Ten times more annoyance than Spark ever did.

Captain Spark might a moment's hot anger provoke,
But the thing would begin and would end in a joke;
But this fool would dangle and flirt with a lady
All the more if she chanced to be married already.

His senseless conceit of his personal charms
Was pleased with imagined domestic alarms,
Putting husbands in tremour, and wives in a flutter,
Over platitudes he condescended to utter.

Now a woman of wit, on the slightest attempt,
Would have squashed such a fellow with silent contempt;
But our dear Mrs. Dobbs, to her husband's vexation,
Thought she showed her *bon ton* by this silly flirtation.

And she thought, too, this youth being her cousin by marriage,
Permitted and sanctioned a freedom of carriage
On her part she otherwise should not have thought of,
Lest Dobbs might have fancied himself reckoned nought of.

VI.

At breakfast one topic engrossed conversation,
The review to come off near the Quagomire Station,
Some eight or nine miles off, where a sham fight would rage,
In which ten thousand troops of all arms would engage.

And as all the great nobs would be at this review,
Of course all their party must be at it too;
So they took a compartment, to be more select,
Which led to results Dobbs did not quite expect.

Sir Lionel and Lady were first to get in,
Who took the far seats where they sat shin to shin;
Then Dobbs and his wife each a corner seat get,
And Adonis between the two ladies is set.

When, just as they're starting, a tall lady, rushing
To the side of their carriage, and into it pushing,
Intrudes on their party; and the porter, before
They have time to expostulate, bangs too the door.

As this lady had a wild look in her eyes,
Mrs. Dobbs, in the suddenness and the surprise,
Took the seat in the middle, and opp'site Adonis,
So that now the new visitor all Dobbs's own is.

When, what was his horror, as they shot from the station,
To discover the lady of last night's flirtation—
He could not be mistaken—and awfully grim
Were his thoughts whether she, too, would recognise him.

But when ladies meet ladies they first criticise
Each the dress of the other in all points, till their eyes
Chance to meet, when, ashamed, each will give a small bounce,
As if nothing had happened, and smooth down her flounce.

But when this was all gone through, the lady with eyes
Pulls a handkerchief out from which fragrance forth flies
Of such delicate perfume, the air smells around
Like a garden of roses, sweet scents so abound.

And, as was quite natural, Dobbs and his dame
Looked round to the source whence this fine fragrance came;
A handkerchief white, of a rather coarse texture
To shed forth a scent of such exquisite mixture.

'Twas in fact of such linen as shirting is made,
And hemmed on three sides from the corners displayed;
Of a size rather large, and in other respects
Not at all such a lawn as a lady selects.

But what seemed most strange was the loving-like way
In which the old lady would kiss it and play
With its folds in her face, ever smiling and grinning,
As with memories connected with this piece of linen.

Oh, Dobbs, hadst thou thought what thine eyes would behold
On that handkerchief corner as it chanced to unfold,
Thou wouldst not have looked, and thou wouldst not have stared
As thine eyes, having once caught its character, glared.

For there, in the corner—why, what does Dobbs see?
In indelible ink but a large L. S. D.—
For Lemuel Sennecharib Dobbs—No. 5—
Can he credit his eyes? Does he sit there alive?

That he sits there alive soon the lady discovers;
Her wild eye flashes bright like recognisant lovers',
And on the doomed Dobbs gazing long with glad sight,
She throws back her head and she laughs with delight.

She laughs with delight, and she gazes again,
Then stretching her neck towards Dobbs like a crane,
She whispers, with lips opening out like a funnel,
"You must give me a kiss as we go through the tunnel."

VII.

Now Dobbs's dilemma was not quite so bad
As it might have been but for this slip of a lad—
This Adonis, who kept so continual a chatter,
Neither Dame Dobbs nor he got a glimpse of the matter.

Mrs. Dobbs thought the old lady's manner was strange,
And her eyes rather wild; but her thought did not range
To the unfathomed consciousness Dobbs was aware of,
By that morning's adventure which he had his share of.

But on entering the tunnel, Mrs. Dobbs in the dark
Leaning over to whisper to Dobbs some remark,
From the opposite corner was caught with a smack,
From a head striking her head, that made her start back.

And in starting back, her head came bang in collision
With another head near her own head's first position,
Which head starting back gave Sir Lionel Spark
A back-stroke severe on his nose in the dark.

From which we infer that intended cross kisses
Resulted in hits more unpleasant than misses;
For though in the daylight they tried to look seemly,
There were four pair of eyes that all watered extremely.

And Sir Lionel's nose had a ruddier hue,
And Adonis kept scratching his amber locks too;
Mrs. Dobbs seems to wince with a pain that still throbs,
And the tall lady looked rather sulky at Dobbs.

But the smarting they suffered gave their thoughts occupation
That kept them employed till they got to the station;
When Adonis so forward of his wife old Dobbs robs,
And Wildeyes immediately fastens on Dobbs.

She looked in his eyes with a tender expression,
As though brimful of feelings too sweet for expression,
With something reproachful—as though her elected
Were endowed with a coolness she had not expected.

On his arm hanging fondly, half sad, and half gay,
She remarked in a playful and petulant way:
"Now, be a good boy, dear; and when we go back,
With a kiss you will make me amends for that smack."

So here was old Dobbs in a pleasant position
To enjoy a review that he wished at perdition;
To see a sham fight with a contest so real
Going on in his breast, it destroyed the ideal.

With a lady in keeping whose strides were so ample,
He was terribly puffed when they gave their first sample
Of their peripatetic performances through
The grounds set apart for this sham fight review.

For 'twas up hill and down dale, full of rocks and furze bushes,
Through which Madam Wildeyes impetuously rushes;
Still dragging old Dobbs as he pants and he wheezes,
And goes, as for Godsake, wherever she pleases.

Till at last Dobbs protested if she would not be still,
He would drive back and leave them to fight out their fill;
"For on such rugged ground, and so stout as I am,
Exertion like this, ma'am, is really no sham."

So they stood on a slope, down frontward inclined,
With the bog or the swamp, Quagomire, just behind;
And they heard in the distance a fifing and drumming,
And then a great shout that the soldiers were coming.

And soon, red and blue, they are thick on the field;
They will dye with sham blood ere they really yield;
But they shoot real cartridge, and blow from great guns
Undeniable smoke with a crack that quite stuns.

VIII.

From the opposite end of the field the attackers
Threw out their sharp-shooters, whose shots went like crackers,
Of the kind they call jumping, much fancied by boys,
Who delight in their jerking and quick cracking noise.

Then the columns of infantry join in the battle,
As with volleys and file-fire they roar and they rattle;
In the terrible onslaught the defenders retiring,
Bring up their great guns and at once commence firing.

To which the attackers respond from a hill
Where they had their artillery all ready and still,
Like a lion asleep, so sound, not even snoring,
But ready to jump up all rampant and roaring.

And they opened their batteries, and they bellowed afar,
With a crash and concussion, so like real war,
The guns of the gallant defenders were stilled,
And then for the grand charge they form on the field.

The infantry drawn out in line gave a volley,
And then through the smoke that enveloped them wholly
Rushed furiously forward; and then on each flank
The cavalry ride up drawn out in close rank.

And in one general melee they meet and they mix,
Till the foe from their ground the defenders unfix;
And the cavalry charging, the beaten troops run,
The enemy advance and the battle is won.

Now Dobbs and the lady, on a gently sloped bank,
Had stood just beyond the defenders' right flank,
And close to a ridge rather crumbly and damp,
That bounded beneath them the Quagomire swamp.

Which swamp thus will cover by lying just so,
The defenders' right flank and the left of the foe;
And this being the case, when the cavalry charge,
The space for spectators by no means is large.

And this fact—being led on so far by the nose—
Dobbs was not quite aware of till just at the close,
When he saw then the en'my throwing out their left flank,
Which was furiously charging right on up the bank.

And as they rode up, and their uniforms showed
The identical squadron Dobbs met on the road;
And the men recognised, at least Dobbs thought they did, him,
He wished that the earth would have opened and hid him.

With his present dilemma, and past recollections,
No time was now left for delays or reflections;
And the lady alarmed extremely of course is
At the headlong career of those men on the horses.

Why Dobbs, they are on you; two yards and an inch
From the ridge of the slope; 'tis no wonder you flinch
And look down with dismay where the crumbling clods slope
To the bog, for your corpus all ready to ope.

Why, man, what the deuce have you ever been doing,
To be led like a fool to your own certain ruin;
For the bank where they stood, being crumbly and hollow,
Went down with their weight—and of course they both follow.

In a sudden descent, with the lady above him,
Down rolled Dobbs with his own gravitation to shove him;
And closed his career with a squash and a shog,
As he sank in the sludge, half-immersed in the bog.

And the lady—alas! that a lady should be
In such a position, with such crowds to see—
While the great shout of laughter that bursts from the soldiers
Attracts the attention of all the beholders.

IX.

Mrs. Dobbs gave a shriek as old Dobbs tumbled down,
And Adonis stood stupid, as his senses had flown;
And had not Sir Lionel popped in at this pass,
Mrs. Dobbs would have dropped in a swoon on the grass.

So the first thing Dobbs saw in his terror's alarms
Was his young wife as usual in Captain Spark's arms;
And he felt yet again what a thorn in the flesh meant,
As he carried her off to a tent of refreshment.

And he groaned in his heart, out of hell there was never
A fatality followed a husband for ever
As this wife of mine—and I doat on her charms—
So perpetually hugged up in that fellow's arms.

Like Satan hurled headlong, lay Dobbs in his shame,
In a lake of bogwater instead of of flame;
With his wild-eyed companion beside and above him,
Whose struggles to rise, down the deeper did shove him.

Relentlessly treading his lower limbs down,
She climbs till success seems her efforts to crown,
And at last, leaving Dobbs in astonishment blank,
With her foot on his buttock she bounds to the bank.

The last shove she gave him, unkindest of all,
Drove him down in the sludge to a yet deeper fall;
And then when she climbed up the clod-formed crag
She waved round her head her detested white flag.

Then Dobbs in his agony of consciousness felt
The cold perspiration all out of him melt;
And he struggles like Samson to rise in his wrath—
Sinking six inches deeper in his bottomless bath.

Then he turned up his eyes to the good people gazing
All along the ridge side at this farce so amazing,
And he shouts while his mouth he can yet freely ope:
"For Godsake, good people, do go get a rope."

And scarce had he spoke when Sir Lionel Spark
Appears with a rope, which he flung to the mark
So truly, the loop of it over Dobbs went,
And then under his arms 'twas by shaking it sent.

Then the people about, just to make some amends
For their previous inaction, set to pull at the ends;
And Dobbs by the pulling, turns over on his face,
With his nose in the sludge, or within just an ace.

Then Dobbs bellowed—"Murder; you'll drown me, I'll choke;
Have a care what you're doing," and spat as he spoke;
Then one of the haulers suggested, "Od rot 'em,
Get a long pole and push the rope down round his ——."

Then a pitchfork was got at Sir Lionel's suggestion,
And helped them to solve this most difficult question;
For in rescuing Dobbs then things pleasantly went all
As soon as the rope got a hold fundamental.

Like a porpoise through ocean old Dobbs through the mire
Is hauled with their tackling-line higher and higher;
And up the bank slope, with his weight half-supported,
As gay as a mudlark he sprang and he sported.

And of all the strange figures that ever upstood,
Old Dobbs licked them all; so beplastered with mud,
With an odour so powerful, a look so unseemly,
The ladies were shocked to behold him extremely.

All but one, who rushed forward as soon as Dobbs rose,
And wiped with her handkerchief all round his nose;
At which the spectators burst out in one roar
Like the echo of all the sham battle before.

X.

Among other gazers at Dobbs's sad plight,
His friend George the "boots" now came up for a sight;
And as soon as he scented old Dobbs in the lump,
He suggested at once he should come to a pump.

On the way as they went, George declared on his honour,
In his green regimentals Dobbs looked quite a stunner;
He was sure if these French fellows chanced but to come,
They would fly with their noses 'twixt finger and thumb.

And with such pleasant jesting, George turning his head
To smother his laughter, to the pump Dobbs was led;
A pump, like a gallows erected on high,
To hang men when justice condemns them to die.

Then Dobbs was put under, and George pumped away
Till the water ran clear, and he hardly would stay,
The fun was so laughable; Dobbs all the while
The rueful occasion of many a smile.

But George was a kind and considerate fellow,
So he brought Dobbs a bumper that made him half-mellow;
And rolled him so tightly with rug above rug,
That Dobbs in the train felt exceedingly snug.

George's treatment, in fact, was hydropathy's action,
Plus brandy and water's serene satisfaction;
And Dobbs woke like Adam from the balmiest snore
When he got to the station, and drove to the Boar.

There George still attended to keep him all right,
Having leave a few hours to go see the sham fight;
And of Dobbs's adventure he's foremost to tell,
It was worth both review and sham battle as well.

Now Dobbs from the mire kept his friends at a distance,
By the odorous proofs which he gave of existence;
And perceiving how George took him up in his plight,
They left Dobbs's case to his management quite.

So when in the carriage they saw Dobbs all snug
In a corner so wrapped up with rug over rug,
They judged that some odour he still would extrude,
So they kept to the windward as far as they could.

All except his companion, who so bored him and bothered,
He wished in his heart she was poisoned or smothered;
But still that white handkerchief held *in terrorem*
Makes him swallow his wrath howsoever she bore him.

But he felt so incensed at his wife and her party,
And in fact with annoyance did so wince and so smart, he
Declared after dinner the first train he got,
He would set off for home whether she went or not.

Mrs. Dobbs tried with tears to persuade him to stay;
But he stormed and he raged on—no, not for a day—
Nor an hour—nor a minute—no, not for the Queen;
To be humbugged and fooled in the way he had been.

No matter who did it, the thing was still done;
He had all the foul treatment and they all the fun;
And not for the best man or woman on earth
Would he stand as a mark and a scapegoat for mirth.

And the more he thought over the haps and the chances
That befel him—more strange than the wildest romances,
The more he determined in Dumbledom Hall
To retire from the dirt and disgrace of it all.

Now Dobbs being determined, his wife must consent;
So Sir Lionel and party along with them went;
Having nothing to cause them to stay in that quarter
Where Dobbs had been publicly made such a martyr.

CANTO FOURTH.

I.

From the Lushingport Station then sans more delay,
By the evening express they are flashing away;
Old Dobbs all elate with successful persistence,
As its spires and its chimneys dissolved in the distance.

Some fifteen odd miles they run on without stop,
And then all at once does their rattling speed drop,
So out they all got for a slight relaxation,
As they had a few minutes to wait at this station.

Sir Lionel and Lady took a stroll on the platform,
When a lady approached with a moderately fat form,
And a tall robust gentleman walked by her side,
With an air rather lordly, but quite free from pride.

When the instant the ladies' eyes met one another,
They flew to embracing and kissing each other;
While the gentlemen stood in a hesitant way,
Not exactly aware what to do or to say.

Till at length the two ladies discovered the truth
How each was the other's companion in youth;
The dearest, devotedest friend each e'er knew,
And both lately married—so what could they do?

Why, they made up a party, Lord Elverton did,
And Lady Godiva would not be forbid,
But would have them all down, and would brook no delays,
To Elverton Castle to spend a few days.

By a lord and a lady to be so invited,
The Dobbses both felt half-alarmed, half-delighted;
But my lord was so frank and my lady so free,
What could they all do in the end but agree.

From the next station stopped at they drove to the castle,
A noble old mansion for feasting and wassail;
Deriving its name from a ruined old fort,
In the Wars of the Roses a famous resort.

A steep slope on one side, and rocks on the other,
Had occasioned the foe who would take it much bother;
For as soon as they ventured their faces to show,
Those above were tipped headlong on those down below.

So when of their number sufficient were killed,
And they thought it a pity more blood should be spilled,
They would pack up their traps and go home, lord and vassal,
The defenders then all getting drunk in the castle.

And such were the games which our forefathers played,
Of bloody contention in which men were made;
For it quickened the genius of every man brother
To be all on the watch so to kill one another.

Then ever a warrior of such mettle arose,
He would thrash to submission all and sundry his foes;
And then as lord dominant bend to his sway
All the violent wills that would pull the wrong way;

Perplexing the nation with personal squabbles,
Each backed by a retinue—rascally rabbles,
Who preferred with the sword to whack off a good slice,
To a life of hard labour and honest device.

And still it appears that our eminent warriors
Were much more of statesmen than killers or harriers;
And left in the hearts of the people a name—
Like a nucleus girt with a halo of fame.

And so, mellowed down now, in distance and time—
Compared with the grandeur, once fierce and sublime,
Of the mail-covered barons who glittered afar—
In our shooting costume, all alive, here we are!

II.

But Elverton Castle of the modern design
Was a mansion you'll seldom see one half so fine;
With the noblest of porticoes ever was seen,
Overlooking a park of the loveliest green;

With trees dotted over so silent and grand,
Like a congress of monarchs majestic they stand
Where for centuries stood they, and, spite of the roar
Of the tempest, shall stand yet for centuries more.

And bounding the park on the right of the view
Stood the old castle frowning in scorn on the new;
With a steep grassy slope that ascent scarce allows,
Except for the sheep where they scantily browse.

And half-down the slope, in a clustering course,
Stretched a dusky green belt of the golden-flowered gorse;
And a sheep-path just under the old castle wall
Led round to the grand panorama of all.

Of some slight refreshment our party partook,
And then sallied out for a grand sunset look
Of the park and the castle and the blue lake beyond—
For I'm sure 'twas a great deal too large for a pond.

They went by a good gravelled walk for so far,
And then by the sheep-path, and presently are
On the smoothest and velvetest turf ever trod;
So browned by the sun it was hardly like sod.

They had stopped on the way several times to admire
The magnificent view, and were still going higher,
And round the old castle, all laughing and talking—
Though Dobbs rather felt it was dangerous walking.

His boots being new ones, the soles were like glass,
And his feet went all ways, as on ice, on the grass;
Till at last out from under his body they went,
And his weight bore him down in a headlong descent.

For his roundness of form and the smooth grassy slope
Induced a rotation which nothing could stop;
And scrambling and scratching, with impotent force,
He bumped, and he bounded, and pitched in the gorse.

He pitched—like a pincushion pitched among pins,
Where the stuffing was fleshy, at the back of the shins,
And likewise above, where abundantly buffed,
He resembled a pincushion pretty well stuffed.

Irrepressible laughter burst forth as he rolled
In a moment away or from help or from hold;
For even his lordship, and lady serene,
Were quite overpowered by the ludicrous scene.

But an accident happening no power could arrest,
As a gentleman would—so he felt for his guest,
How this awkward mischance of all dignity robs
On his first introduction the ill-fated Dobbs.

From the first my lord gave Mr. Dobbs that attention
Secured to a guest by our social convention;
But this was a memory, through famine and strife,
Would stick to old Dobbs to the end of his life.

Dobbs's name to his lordship must picture perforce
His flight through the air and his pitch in the gorse,
And the agonised look as the thousand-fold jobs
Of the gorse thorns tasted the blood of old Dobbs.

Unfortunate Dobbs! What will fate next prepare
Thy sensitive fibres or feelings to tear?
Or when, in the name of all faithful romances,
Wilt thou know the end of thy griefs and mischances?

III.

Lord Frederick, Sir Lionel, slid down the grass
To where Dobbs was laid in his pitiful pass,
Which assisting him out of as well as they could,
They then all returned in a quieter mood.

With a delicate sense of the part where he twitches,
They did not ask Dobbs how he felt in his breeches;
But after a downright and good hearty laugh
Old Dobbs was as ready as they were to chaff.

Lord Frederick explained then how he had succeeded
A miserly uncle—but would not do as he did;
But a walk was marked out which would make the way plain,
And avoid such mischances occurring again.

Sir Lionel inquired then how came it to pass
Dobbs's boots and no others had slipped on the grass;
But Dobbs would not tell him, though, in fact, it was true,
Since his dip in the bog he had changed them for new.

Illustrating strangely how all his mishaps
Each one with the next interweaves, overlaps,
So curiously, once having broke the congeries
He was thereby compelled to go through the whole series.

An astonishing fact; and, if people consider,
Of endless importance. As Mr. George Bidder
Or any abstruse calculator may show,
Provided you'll follow as far as he'll go.

For my part I deal with the facts as they come,
Preferring the rule of the finger and thumb;
And when one hand's exhausted—without any bother,
I go on with the finger and thumb of the other.

My business, indeed, is to tell the plain facts
Of all Mr. Dobbs's astonishing acts;
Now and then giving way to a mood sentimental,
And of friends giving notices quite incidental.

In fact I just follow the bent of my humour
Not dreadfully awed by the trumpet of Rumour,
With which she goes braying and routing so fast,
One's ears are distracted with blast after blast.

So that in fact, if one would open one's ears
To take in and hold all the rumours one hears,
The world with its wagging tongue's come to that pass
One had need be provided with ears like an ass.

For instance, 'twas rumoured in London that day
That the bank of a bog had *en masse* given way,
Where, during the sham fight, the crowd overbore,
And that forty or fifty were never seen more.

That two hundred soldiers were told off and hauling
With ropes for five hours, and the screaming and bawling
Of the victims unrescued, appalled where they stood
The stoutest hearts there, as they stuck in the mud.

With every additional particular given,
More fully the further the rumour was driven;
Till at last even Dobbs, placed in London's great centre,
Could not really have guessed 'twas his own misadventure.

But the telegraph, now introduced, does not give
Such extravagant rumours a long time to live;
For it sits on a kind of ubiquitous throne,
Devouring all rumours excepting its own.

Like dingy old Saturn who dwelt in the mirk,
Getting children and eating them—scandalous work;
Its own little pets will the telegraph dandle,
And then make a meal of, and think it no scandal.

IV.

As some slight diversion from Dobbs's mischance
Came the dinner at length, like a piece of romance
Set out on a preconceived purpose and plan,
In which each player acts his own part as he can.

The hostess apologised, making Dobbs stare,
For absence of state, and for plainness of fare;
While Mrs. Dobbs, awed by the grandeur and state,
Kept continually admiring the beautiful plate.

The wines were not quite of the kind to induce
Fermentation of brain by their liberal use;
But the host seeing how Dobbs kept screwing his mouth,
Supplied him forthwith from the sunnier south.

And under that influence Dobbs got so bland,
His features and faculties softly expand;
And there as a guest at the Elverton board,
He felt that a man was as good as a lord.

Which of course no one doubted; and least of all those
Who were here the dispensers with such grace as shows
The inborn sense which can only be shown
By those who have got a slight gift of their own.

'Tis the soul's effloresence, the last crowning grace,
That makes the eyes sparkle, and beams in the face;
'Tis the glory of life, and can only be given
As a free-gift to those who are favoured of heaven.

And this is the origin, this is the source,
Of our bulwarks against man's mere animal force;
And this was the life of that feudal array,
Which, wanting this essence, shall crumble away.

Generations of Dobbses may gather up gold,
But not at that price can the empire be sold;
For the heart and the soul of humanity still
Must be won to its work by a loftier skill.

There were days when a pig would be kept in a sty,
But now he is worshipped and set up on high;
They will come to his leveé, and nobody laugh,
Provided he's golden—it once was a calf.

His cash is his touchstone, and if he has plenty,
He's as good as a lord—aye, a dozen or twenty;
Then what does nobility make of itself
If it opens its doors to possessors of pelf?

I don't blame Lord Frederick, nor anyone else;
He's a part of the system, and the system is false;
As witness old Dobbs, who would not in old time
Have been now getting drunk in a style so sublime.

But the wine was so good, so especially fine,
And perhaps, too, the mixture of previous wine,
At all events, somehow he got in that state,
As our Scotch friends would say—"He was noways so blate."

The end of it all was, he dropped off asleep,
And his head on his breast ever bobbing would keep,
Till two footmen came and assisted to climb
To the bed most convenient our hero sublime.

Adonis had sneaked off to join the three ladies,
To their great annoyance—until the game played is
In couples, the two ladies making one pair,
Leaving young Mrs. Dobbs to Adonis's care.

Meantime the two gentlemen get on together,
As gentlemen do who are judges of weather;
Who can carry their cargo wherever they swim,
In such sort as always to keep the ship trim.

V.

After slumber and breakfast their spirits recruiting,
On the morrow two parties were formed to go shooting;
Whereof Captain Spark and Lord Frederick one is,
And the other is made up of Dobbs and Adonis.

Whereof the two first were to go the long round,
And come back on the others when castleward bound;
So that should their sport be indifferent good,
They might meet, or shoot on, or do just as they would.

Attendance was proffered to Dobbs and Adonis,
But rather declined by these two shooting cronies;
Who, with two double guns and a whole stock of cartridges,
Sallied forth to astonish the hares and the partridges.

A small boy with game-bag they did think to take,
And then for the moors they ferociously make;
With a swagger and bounce in their whole air and bearing,
That might half of the game of the manor be scaring.

They had dogs too, of course, though they hardly knew why,
But entrusted their management to the small boy;
And the small boy considered that out of the set,
The two with long tails were the best sportsmen yet.

Then pompously loading both barrels at once,
And capping the nipples, they shouldered their guns;
And partly entrusting their route to the boy,
On each other's muzzles they kept a sharp eye.

Before they expected of game yet a trace,
A stone by the hedgeside seemed shifting its place—
"By G—d, that's a hare," said old Dobbs, and bang, bang,
His two barrels went, and away the hare sprang.

Then Adonis, cool Trojan, up at once with his gun,
Intending, no doubt, he would show the hare fun,
And sent—bang, bang—after, a splutter of hail—
But all the hare did was to flutter its tail.

And if hares can laugh, that hare laughed with its cronies,
At the innocent practice of perfumed Adonis;
Who declared, quite astonished to see the hare go,
"He never saw game that resisted shot so."

Dobbs squinted along his two barrels all ways,
And declared that he could not say much in their praise;
He was sure such a thing now he never could do,
As miss such a shot if the barrels were true.

The small boy looked up with the simplest of faces,
And declared that his father had killed a score braces
In half a day's shooting, with never a one
But that there and very identical gun.

"My lad, don't tell me that," quoth Dobbs, very large,
"Else he killed all the more from the spread of the charge,
Which made it less matter how crooked it went,
On account of, I'm certain, the barrel being bent.

"But bent or not bent, let us pop in fresh cartridges,
And then have a fly at a covey of partridges."
So they loaded and marched, and they had not far stirred,
When all on a sudden the field round them whirred.

Then they pointed their guns where the air was all black
With the whirring of wings as they sped on their track;
And deliberately aiming, went bang, bang—pop, pop,—
But the deuce a one bird condescended to drop.

So what was it now? 'Twas a staggerer sure
That game's so abundant and sport is so poor;
But they looked with the air of two shooters of stamp,
And concluded at once that the powder was damp.

VI.

In this damp dilemma the small boy suggested
They should follow the dogs, and present when they rested;
But Dobbs and Adonis, consulting together,
Preferred to go more on the hills in the heather.

The fields were too flat and too open for sport,
Except of the tamest and stupidest sort;
But up on the moors in the fresh mountain air,
If their guns would but carry they were sure of sport there.

So in savage elation determined to slay,
To the moors, to the moors, they are off and away;
Having gravely re-loaded, the least chance they got,
They discharged both their barrels of powder and shot.

Then after a good deal of trudging and firing,
Adonis behind them kept rather retiring;
And at last from the back of a hedge he let fly,
And shouted, "He's down; run and pick him up, boy."

So the boy ran and brought him a rather strange bird of
The game species as ever mortal yet heard of;
"A partridge?" Adonis asks, with a slight flush,
"Nay, sir," quoth the boy, "'tis what we call a thrush."

At which Dobbs obstreperously laughed at his crony's
Achievement, and so much he nettled Adonis,
He answered him tartly, as small as it is,
It weighed twice as much yet as any of his.

So Dobbs took his turn in the rifleman style
Of dodging at hedgesides, some bird to beguile,
Till he let fly a shot, and a shout: "He is down;
A blackcock, by Jove; I will bet you a crown."

So the boy ran and brought a bird, certainly black,
And it might be a cock, too, among its own pack;
But when Dobbs said "A blackcock," the boy said "Oh, no;
In this country side, sir, we call it a crow."

But Dobbs, when Adonis laughed, bet him a crown
It would weigh at least six of his partridges down,
And as weight was his standard, he therefore could claim
Six to one of their bagful be put to his name.

But now they desired that the small boy would lead on,
The shortest way back to the place they agreed on
To meet near the castle; for now they, in short,
Were wearied to death with their heavy day's sport.

So the boy brought them back by a different route,
Which saved them from going a great way about;
But which brought them to what they so little enjoyed,
They would rather have travelled ten miles to avoid.

They came soon, in fact, to a pretty wide ditch,
With a plank laid across for a bridge; but yet which
An active young fellow would leap at a bound,
Nor ever for bridge or for plank would look round.

But Adonis preferred to walk over, and Dobbs,
With a horrible qualm, felt his heart go in throbs
At the look of the plank, 'twas so rotten and thin,
And the mud had so foul and so slimy a skin.

Adonis was ready enough to declare,
When he was all safe, he was sure it would bear;
But advised Dobbs, withal, this precaution to take,
To walk quickly over in case it should break.

And Dobbs did walk quickly, and quickly the plank
Gave way to his weight, and imbedded he sank
Half-way to his knees in the muddiest mess
That ever defiled a respectable dress.

VII.

Then bitterly savage felt Dobbs in his heart
At the laugh that burst forth on Adonis's part;
And, to aggravate more and make frantic his mind,
In which the small boy with his impudence joined.

But, disguising his rancour, he put on a face
Of dirty submission, befitting his place;
And he begged of Adonis to take a good stand,
With a hold of the ditch side, and reach him a hand.

And Adonis, suspecting no malice prepense,
Took hold with his left of a stump of a fence,
And reached out his right hand to Dobbs where he stood,
Which he caught at and made a great spring from the mud.

But his weight and the suction that pulled down his legs,
Like the buckets of pumps when they draw to the dregs,
Occasioned a check in his rise as he sprang,
That caused his whole weight on Adonis to hang.

And he, tender youth, would have kept good his stay,
But the treacherous stump that he held by gave way,
And Dobbs, on the balance, the dry bank to win,
The ill-starred Adonis—was forced to pull in.

He pulled with so strong and so sudden a jerk,
'Twas impossible quite for Adonis to shirk
The horrible bath, where the weight and the strength
Of Dobbs laid him helpless to wallow at length.

Ill-fated Adonis, the milk of his blood
Was turned into gall, when old Dobbs laughing stood
At the pitiful mess of his perfumed apparel—
Provocation enough for an angel to quarrel.

"You cowardly beast, let me come at you now,"
As out of his mud-bath he clambered somehow,
And ran at old Dobbs with so sudden a strength
That he in his laughter was laid at his length.

Then Adonis fell on him and plastered his person,
And pummelled and kicked him with savage aversion,
Till the prostrated Dobbs by his contact became,
Compared with Adonis—another the same.

And a sweet pair they were as they struggled and kicked;
Though like bears' cubs they might be improved to be licked;
Till they came to a sense of their true situation,
And of dirty hostilities made a cessation.

Being both in one mess now, the practical view
Of the question came equally, what could they do?
And when their inventive wit put to the push is,
They despatched the small boy for a couple of brushes.

They bribed him with two silver coins then and there
To speak not a word of this dirty affair,
Which he solemnly promised, and pockets the pelf,
And at least he kept faithfully that to himself.

Then they set to with pocket-knives scraping the mud,
Assisting each other as well as they could;
And they skulked in a hollow, among the green bushes,
Till the boy should return with the couple of brushes.

Which at last the boy did do; and then they set to
To revive of their clothes the original hue,
Keeping coughing and spitting from inhaling the dust
Into which they had pulverised all the mud crust.

Then at length to the castle, well on in the day,
Rather late and light-loaded they turned on their way,
Which, as they approached, they encounter the greeting
Of the other two sportsmen, and three ladies meeting.

VIII.

They were walking along rather towards the lake,
So Dobbs and Adonis hung off in their wake;
And fearing their sport would not add to their fame,
Sent the small boy back home with their guns and their game.

Then slowly they sauntered along the lake side,
Where the yacht and the pinnace on the blue waters ride;
And they make up two parties to go for a sail,
And perhaps have a try which in speed will prevail.

To proportion the loads there were two in the pinnace,
Adonis and Dobbs—on the water mere ninnies,
As much as in sporting; but both much too large
To confess they could not take a small boat in charge.

But the weather being moderate, Lord Elverton thought
It mattered not whether they could or could not;
He presumed that they had common sense and discretion,
Though nautical neither by taste nor profession.

But the first small performance they made with the vessel
Proved both in its guidance so very imbecile,
Lord Elverton hailed them at once they should lower
The sails ere they capsized, and take each an oar.

For Adonis at the helm so unskilfully steered,
When Dobbs got the sails up, the vessel so veered
From the wind, it heeled over so deeply unpoised,
Only Dobbs's weight saved them from being capsized.

So they soon hauled the sails down and got each an oar,
And they muddled about not too far from the shore;
While the yacht sped away on the wings of the wind,
And left our redoubtable sportsmen behind.

And being two high and adventurous spirits,
Who suspected the world only half knew their merits,
They did not quite relish to be so shut out
Like two boys in a boat there to paddle about.

And somehow Dobbs's dignity rather took fire,
Though attention was shown him that nothing could tire
From hostess and host; but perhaps from the sequel,
'Twas himself that felt conscious he was not their equal.

At all events, Dobbs, the great bulk of the crew
Of the vessel, felt savage for something to do;
So finding harpoons in the boat's bottom, soon
They went to work some kind of fish to harpoon.

They rowed all about, and they speared to the bottom
At flat fish or eels—but somehow never got 'em;
They saw them quite plain through the clear water's green,
But after they struck they were never more seen.

At salmon and pike, too, they then had a try,
But found of their boat they were both very shy;
They in fact were despairing, when Dobbs, with an air
Of tremendous importance, cries, "Hush, have a care.

"There's a seal sleeping yonder; and if I don't prick him
To death, have your harpoon all ready to stick him.
Row gently; row gently." And gently they crept
On the seal that at least still most steadfastly slept.

Then Dobbs standing up with his lip on a curl,
Prepared his destruction-winged harpoon to hurl;
And he launched forth the stroke with such death-dealing slaughter,
He pitched overboard heels o'er head in the water.

He turned quite a summersault, head foremost down,
His head bobbing up rather bald in the crown;
And he kicked with each leg, and he splashed with each arm,
While Adonis shrieked out in the utmost alarm.

IX.

He shrieked and he held up his arms in despair,
To see old Dobbs drowning and nobody there ;
While Dobbs splashed and tumbled and rolled like a porpus,
In his desperate efforts to save his old corpus.

He flung up his arms, and he struck out his legs,
And for help from Adonis he franticly begs,
When the mouthful of water he gulps and he guggles,
Permit him to speak in the midst of his struggles.

But Adonis, so helpless and panic-struck stands,
Though an oar lay within half a yard of his hands ;
Old Dobbs was gone gasping, preparing to sink,
Ere Adonis to reach that oar to him could think.

And when he did reach it, old Dobbs with the grip
Of a drowning man caught it and never let slip,
Till he reached the boat edge, where he held like grim death,
With his blue lips laid open and gasping for breath.

And in the mad impulse of life's preservation,
He climbs as it sinks, till the mast's declination
Overbalanced the boat, which then capsizing clean,
Its bottom and keel are now all that is seen.

And under its shell now Adonis is telling
His grief with the wildest and frightfullest yelling,
As caught by old Dobbs with a drowning man's grasp,
For a mouthful of air he will grapple and gasp.

And in truth 'twas a trying position for him,
To be drowned, and extinguished, and cramped every limb,
Simultaneously struggling in life and death strife,
Without e'en the chance of a swim for his life.

Nay, to one who imagined himself nothing small,
To be drowned in the dark was the worst cut of all;
With a clog like old Dobbs to be dragging him down—
Ah, who could so die with heroic renown.

To be seen and recorded perhaps on his tomb,
How bravely he met and accepted his doom,—
But now in their struggling from under the boat,
Adonis appears by an oar kept afloat.

And the yacht, to his great gladness, now close at hand,
Gives promise of getting old Dobbs to dry land,
Who Adonis's legs in his grip had so got 'em,
He soon would have pulled oar and all to the bottom.

The ladies now shrieked when they dragged him in sight,
To see that old Dobbs was insensible quite;
And seeing the boat was keel up in the water,
They inquired if a squall had not suddenly caught her.

But Adonis yet breathless, half-drowned, and all dripping,
As he staggered, disgusted with all about shipping,
Gasped out in a peevish and querulous tone,
"For Godsake, good ladies, do let me alone.

"'Twas Dobbs who lies drowned there who capsized the boat.
We saw on the lake a seal sleeping afloat,
And Dobbs with a stroke of his harpoon so caught her,
He toppled himself headlong into the water."

"A seal!" said Lord Elverton, quite in surprise;
"A seal!" said Sir Lionel, opening his eyes;
"A seal!" said the ladies, repeating the word;
"Yes; a seal!" said Adonis, even his choler stirred.

"And there you may see him, heart-struck, I'll be bound."
On which simultaneously all there looked round;
And with eyes they beheld, and with noses they nosed—
A dog lately drowned and now half-decomposed.

X.

Though Dobbs did lie drowned, dead and motionless there,
And his bride hung her head in her widowed despair,
'Twas impossible sure not to laugh when they heard
The incongruous climax of acts so absurd.

And even when they set to restore Dobbs thereafter,
There was something about him that still moved their laughter;
As if 'twere some joke that the higher powers played,
And he could not be dead, though so deathlike he laid.

His weight and his corpulence, always a joke,
The risible faculties still would provoke;
Which the blue deathly visage, unimagined before,
By preventing expression, intensified more.

So with tremulous haste between laughter and grief,
Their acts were as quick as their council was brief;
But though all means were tried which the yacht could afford,
The life in old Dobbs not a whit seemed restored.

He lay there as blue and as burly as ever;
From his lips not a sigh, from his pulse not a quiver;
Though brandy into him was liberally spooned,
He lay there as dead as the dog he harpooned.

But they rubbed none the less; nay, they rubbed all the more,
Till they thought he did not look so blue as before;
And decided that were he alive still or dead,
They would take him ashore and would put him to bed.

So a stout door with mattress and bedding were brought,
And four lusty fellows well under it got,
And marched to the Castle with door, Dobbs, and all,
Though not to the tune of the Dead March in Saul.

For despatch was the word; and so swiftly they marched,
Till up the broad stairs, through the portal o'erarched,
They tilted his feet, with incaution so rash,
Dobbs slid off the door, and came down with a crash.

With a terrible crash on his head and his shoulders
He fell with a groan that astounded his holders;
For the brandy within, and the bruise from without,
Restored the arrested heart's action, no doubt.

At all events, old Dobbs came to himself there,
And rose then, and scratched his bruised head with an air
So excessively comic, the men all stood laughing,
And Dobbs took the notion the fellows were chaffing.

So, his face turning purple with rage and with pain,
He took two by the neck, and with might and with main
He jowled their two heads till their eyes flashed with light,
When the whole fell on him and pinioned him tight.

Then just at this crisis there entered the hall
Lord Frederick, Sir Lionel, ladies and all,
And looked in amazement where old Dobbs appears
With four fellows struggling, and flushed to the ears.

"Why, what is all this?" says Lord Elverton then,—
"My lord, he is mad," whispered one of the men.
"My lord, 'tis a lie,"—gasps old Dobbs, keeping cool,—
"It is not I am mad, but 'tis he that's a fool."

Lord Elverton bid them then liberate Dobbs,—
And sent his late bearers to seek other jobs,—
While all present came around him there and then,
Glad to see him alive and in action again.

But Dobbs, with simplicity he needs must reveal,
Inquired of Adonis the fate of the seal;
At which all there present laughed out with new zest,—
The gentlemen loudly, the ladies supprest.

CANTO FIFTH.

I.

Mr. Dobbs to the gills with his passion grew red,
And he trembled with rage from his foot to his head:
Again made a laughing stock!—Never from now,
He swore a high oath, and he vowed a great vow.

That is, in his heart : 'twas suppressively sworn,
And vowed, *sotto voce*. 'Twas not to be borne,
That he, the last star of the great line of Dobbs,
Be the jackpudding, no ! not of princes nor snobs.

Too proud to laugh with them, too sullen to yield,
He vowed there and then to retire from the field;
And he swore in his heart that, in spite of them all,
He would sleep not again till in Dumbledom Hall.

And this being resolved on, he bottled his rage,
And turned like a bear, with a growl, to engage
In the good humoured banter that still will play round
The snob or the butt wheresoever he's found.

To a certain grim gaiety forcing his face,
He tried to look smiling with dismal grimace,
When who should then enter—he surely should not—
But the boy with the bagful of game they had shot.

And, with the most boyish and innocent air,
He emptied the gamebag before them all there ;
And, touching his cap with most consummate ease,
He asked of them gravely : "What orders, sirs, please ?"

And that the due honours should fairly be shared,
He said—and one wonders so small a boy dared—
To Adonis, "Your partridge seems of a strange stock;"
And then to old Dobbs, "And so does your blackcock."

And he held them both up to the company's gaze,
While Dobbs, flushing purple with rage and amaze :
"You impertinent varlet!"—and catching the crow,
Slapped it over the boy's mouth—"how dare you do so!"

Then the boy danced round Dobbs as small boys only can,
When they really do purpose to fight with a man;
And being a game boy, both plucky and staunch,
Dancing forward, he pummelled old Dobbs in the paunch.

And then dancing backward when Dobbs tried to close,
He popped in and got home with his left on Dobbs' nose;
Then dancing wide round him the mirth was renewed,
While Dobbs there the laughing-stock helplessly stood.

Then boiling with vengeance too burning to bear,
On the hapless Adonis, who laughed loudest there,
He turned like a wild boar, and savagely lent him
A smack on the chops that along the floor sent him.

Then a slight shriek arose, which immediately after
Strangely merged into titters of ill-suppressed laughter;
But the heart of Adonis of such mettle made is,
He could bear any insult—except before ladies.

And having at school been a fighter of note,
Who had thoroughly drubbed every boy he had fought,
He now starts to his feet, while his every pulse throbs,
With deliberate design to exterminate Dobbs.

With the swift intuition of nature he stands
Before the huge Dobbs with his doubled-up hands,
And then, his whole soul in the effort, struck out
His right in Dobbs' eye and his left on his snout.

The ladies all fainted and fell of a heap,
Mrs. Dobbs, as a widow, quite preparing to weep;
While not quite approving such prize-ring-like jobs,
The gentlemen rushed to the rescue of Dobbs.

II.

By force and entreaty they drew off Adonis,
While Dobbs in a state of mind not quite his own is,
But more now than ever determined to leave
This castle—enchanted, he did half-believe.

He retired to his room, where he sponged the blood off
His mouth and his nose, where 'twas dried on and rough;
His nose showing puffy and ruddy in dye,
And a dark tinge appearing around his left eye.

Then he called his wife to him to go for a walk,
Taking care first their luggage to label and pack;
And his wife having put on her bonnet and shawl,
They went out for a short walk, he said, that was all.

They walked from the castle till they came to an inn,
A posting-house properly, where they sold gin
And brandy, of which old Dobbs took a potation,
And then hired a coach to go on to the station.

Mrs. Dobbs, when the horses were put in, demurred;
But Dobbs held his finger up: "Don't speak one word.
By this blackened eye, and by this swollen nose,
It was time that our visit should come to a close.

"If it do seem uncivil, let them first begin
Being civil to strangers they have taken in;
But never in me, I have sworn, shall a Dobbs
Be a butt and a laughing-stock only for snobs.

"For your luggage don't fret. I'll arrange at the station
That it follows us next train to our destination;
For to-night, I have sworn it, in Dumbledom Hall
I will drink my own port and will laugh at them all."

When they got to the station, Dobbs looked all about,
But no train being due then, no porter popped out;
So they strolled on the platform, where earnest and short,
Two fellows were talking, of a nondescript sort.

Not exactly like bailiffs, or messengers, they
Had a lounging, indefinite sort of a way
About them, and cat-like expression of face—
One unconsciously wished them in some other place.

And passing, repassing, continually, close
The Dobbses, they twigged at last Dobbs's swelled nose
And black eye; and then, though at first scarce to mention,
Dobbs more and more seemed to engage their attention.

And then they retired and consulted together;
Then one left the station, still leaving the other,
Who, though in the background, occasioned some throbs
In his heart, by still keeping an eye upon Dobbs.

For Dobbs had got nervous. But now here's the train,
And Dumbledom rises ascendant again;
And Dobbs, in his fancy, in Dumbledom Hall
Is drinking his port and defying them all.

But softly, good Dobbs. By the blazes, what want they?
To look so at Dobbs; sure their manners are scanty.
But one of the two then, without the least fuss,
Says to Dobbs where he sat: "You must come, sir, with us."

Then he threw back the door. "I'll be d——d if I do,"
Quoth Dobbs, all on fire, "I want nothing with you."
At which the other smiled: "We've a warrant, my man,
To catch you and keep you wherever we can."

Which they had a policeman behind to enforce,
And Dobbs was dragged out of the carriage of course;
So stunned and so stupefied with the transaction,
He relapsed into passive and silent inaction.

III.

Putting Dobbs in a coach, without minding his wife,
Mrs. Dobbs, of course, followed the joy of her life;
And when Dobbs made a movement for her too to come,
His captor remarked: "She had better go home.

"These women, you see, sir, can't well be allowed,
For the patients our wards now do quite overcrowd."
"Your wards and your patients!" quoth Dobbs, "by my life,
I'm a justice of peace, sir, and this is my wife.

"And by that great justice, an Englishman's right,
You shall smart for this outrage committed to-night;
Whatever this warrant you speak of may be,
Mind what you're about, else I'll let you all see."

The other looked hard at him, full in the eyes,
A little in doubt, but much more in surprise;
"You play your part well, sir, uncommonly well,
Though only what suits condescending to tell.

"But just to show you that I'm up to your fig,
May I ask where you bought, sir, this elegant wig?"
Which saying, he seized hold of old Dobbs's hair,
And gave it a jerk that made both his eyes stare.

Which so aggravates Dobbs, that his choler, scarce cooled,
Again all his senses completely o'erruled;
And he seized on the fellow, and shook him about,
Till they both paused to breathe again, fairly done out.

Whereupon the policeman, addressing old Dobbs,
Declared that he could not allow of such jobs;
That the gents had a warrant—no need to revile 'em—
To take him at once back to Crackpate Asylum.

"To Crackpate Asylum! What in heaven's name is this?
They've mistaken their man. I'm a justice of peace,
Well known and respected."—"In peace, I suppose,
You got," quoth the other, "that eye and that nose?"

At which all three laughed. And old Dobbs once again
Was floored with the adverse concurrences then;
And of mortal mishaps, who could ever conceive,
Being seized for a lunatic out without leave?

But such was the fact. And the warrant withal
Described in all points just so stout, just so tall—
Except that Sir Malcolm—for so he was called—
The runaway patient—was perfectly bald.

A Highland Scotch laird, from our northern climes,
With a bee in his bonnet that flew out at times;
His friends being jealous it might fly abroad,
Had kindly consulted and laid him in quod.

Then said Dobbs: "You may laugh, sirs, but I still declare
You are under mistake, and I bid you beware."
Then the constable answered: "If that ground you rest on,
Then a magistrate's order must settle the question."

"Agreed," quoth old Dobbs; and so it was settled,
Though Dobbs at the thought still did feel rather nettled;
The absurdity and the annoyance so gall him,
He wondered what next strange mishap would befall him.

But with true philosophy braving his fate,
In the midst of his troubles he drank and he ate;
He sighed out his sorrows o'er brandy and water,
And a good supper served by the landlady's daughter.

But when he'd retire, after all the day's strife,
The worst cut of all was to part with his wife;
For his barbarous captor, the room door must lock it,
And sleep by his side with the key in his pocket.

IV.

To Lushingport town getting back the next morning,
A place to which Dobbs had not dreamed of returning;
Old Dobbs and his case were had up to the court,
Whither idlers and vagabonds daily resort.

And it chanced his friend George, of the Blue Boar, was sent
On an errand that way as the Dobbs party went;
And he recognised Dobbs on his way to the court,
And ran on his errand to get back to the sport.

When Dobbs was brought forward to have his case stated,
His nose of its swelling was nothing abated;
And his eye had a delicate circle of blue,
Tinted off to an orange or yellowish hue.

When Dobbs said from Elverton Castle he'd come,
They smiled. Then they asked him where was he at home?
"At Dumbledom." None there knew aught of the place.
"What was he?" "A gentleman." "Very bad case."

But Dobbs getting choleric, loudly declared
He would sue yet for justice whoever there dared
Interfere with his freedom or that of his wife—
An Englishman's birthright defended with life.

Dobbs's captor then mildly declared that the way
Of the runaway patient was just such as they
Had heard from the lips of the gentleman there,
Except that his head had no vestige of hair.

He was always a gentleman. Always connected
With nobles and gentry. And always respected.
And always withal he had some pretty girl
As his wife, whom he dared you to touch at your peril.

And the question was, could any barber instil
The hair on the scalp with such wonderful skill;
Or by a false scalp's nice adhesion attain
The appearance of growth from the natural grain.

Now it happened, a sailor, not long off the water,
Who stood behind Dobbs, thought he'd clear up the matter;
So the bowl of his pipe, with red ashes within,
He brought gently in contact with Dobbs's bald skin.

Whereat Dobbs jumping up, yelled aloud with the pain,
Till ceiling and walls rung and echoed again;
And the sailor remarked, with an oath and a grin:
"Oh, by G—d, there's no doubt 'tis the natural skin."

But the general audience, not being aware
Of the immediate occasion, all turned round to stare
At the runaway lunatic—such was the text—
All waiting in wonder for what he'd do next.

But Dobbs still protesting he was not the man,
Was asked, is there no one in town whom he can
Refer to who knows him. And just then his eye
Fell on George from the Blue Boar, so comic and sly.

So George was called up to declare what he knew
About Dobbs. But alas! if he told what was true,
He could only make Dobbs more equivocal show
In the eyes of the court. And it really was so.

Being suddenly, quite unexpectedly asked,
He let out little facts that so strangely unmasked
Mr. Dobbs's proceedings that night at the Boar,
'Stead of mending his case, 'twas made worse than before.

Then, to crown all, a lady came into the court,
Whither idlers and vagabonds daily resort;
And as if Dobbs were "William," and long she had "missed him,"
She rushed at him, caught him, and hugged him and kissed him.

V.

Alas, for old Dobbs! For dilemma dilemma
Succeeds; just as Edwin still follows his Emma
In the novels where love toils from chapter to chapter,
Through volumes of troubles to get at its rapture.

But this is no novel. Reality here
Looks out with a sharpness so terribly clear;
Old Dobbs, so involved and so martyred with troubles,
Half looks on love's dreams as on urchin-blown bubbles.

Translucent and spherical, glittering there
With the hues of the rainbow, oh, are they not fair?
But be thou the fool their illusion to clasp,
They will mock thee with nothing and melt in thy grasp.

Oh, fond foolish urchin, blow thy fresh bubbles o'er thee;
Again let them hang there and glitter before thee;
Again let them mock thy gaunt heart to despair,
With the hope that thou never canst realise there.

No more than old Dobbs, who in ripe years is learning
To look into life with a better discerning;
And to know that the pictures of paradise sketched
By the devil, are illusions that cannot be reached.

But still the illusion so lovely appeared,
Though it melted and faded as fast as he neared,
Like a rainbow abutting against the green hill—
Like a child, as he was, Dobbs would follow it still.

But now Mr. Dobbs is concluded to be
A person it might not be safe to set free;
And though none could explain how he came to have hair
On his head, it was thought there was trickery there.

His account of himself, with black eye and swollen nose,
And his violent conduct in court, pre-suppose
A daring duplicity; in fact, there was danger
To their town in the presence of such a strange stranger.

And the innocent aspect so cleverly played
By the girl he had with him; the discovery made,
Just now in the court, of the elderly dame
Who to his affections asserted a claim;

The account his own witness gave of his strange doings
At the Blue Boar Hotel,—with the kindest construings,
All tended to show, if he were not insane,
He must be endowed with a criminal brain.

Their town being justly held high in repute
For virtue and morals, could a magistrate put
Such a terrible ruffian at liberty there,
To try all his tricks, and to do all he dare?

Thank God he knew better, and dared yet to do
A magistrate's duty, to his country still true;
And might God desert him, as well he'd deserve,
When from upholding virtue he ever should swerve.

He only regretted the villain's cool time
Of life kept him free of overt acts of crime,
Whereby he himself had not power to administer
Admonition well due to a rascal so sinister.

He rejoiced not the less at the fortunate chance
That prevented, no doubt, his intended advance
Into new fields of action, he hoped long to be
From such criminality happily free.

And so in a humming of smothered applause,
Dobbs is taken in charge by the hands of the laws;
By the doers of justice—for so we must style 'em—
Consigned to snug quarters in Crackpate Asylum.

VI.

When the elderly dame heard the new destination
Of Dobbs, her delight gave a fresh confirmation
To every one there, who by facts could be led,
That Dobbs, like herself, must be wrong in the head.

For she frankly confessed she had lived for two years
At the Crackpate herself. And her friends, it appears,
Had boarded her there till it seemed that her mind
Held better together to be unconfined.

And as she was harmless quite in her notions,
They had left her at liberty since in her motions;
Till meeting with Dobbs in the manner related,
Her distemper, 'tis certain, had nothing abated.

But whether the moon or old Dobbs made her worse,
Is a difficult question to settle of course;
But one thing is certain, old Dobbs would as soon,
Instead of being there she had been at the moon.

As soon ; nay, much sooner ;—at the devil e'en for that,
For the fact is, Dobbs did not know what she'd be at ;
Nor probably did she herself, if the manner
In which she went on were our sole guide to scan her.

For the fact is that ever since that fatal night,
When Dobbs inadvertently kissed her, she quite
Had been occupied in one perpetual adorning
Her person with finery, both evening and morning.

And still she would talk of some visitor coming,
And love ditties kept, too, continually humming ;
And skipping and prancing—like youth when 'tis full
Of the blood of its freshness escaping from school.

But whether the moon or old Dobbs was the cause
Is hard to determine ; but which ever was,
'Tis certain that Dobbs had the heaviest share
Of the consequent vexing annoyance to bear.

For instance, take only the dance that she led him
On the sham battle field. Or the game she now played him
Before the whole court, when she claimed his acquaintance,
And made him flush purple with rage and repentance.

No matter. His one inadvertent act gave
To her the occasion she should so behave ;
As one petty sparkle enkindling dry fuel,
May cause conflagration with consequence cruel.

For the roots of events from a small mustard grain,
Where contingencies apt, though long dormant, have lain,
May arise where no measure can fitly compare
The result with the cause that determined it there.

And so Dobbs's kiss, all expectancy scorning,
At that midnight meeting—or on in the morning—
Came back in profusion so very profuse,
Made him wish either her or himself at the deuce.

She hung on his neck, and she vowed and declared
She would follow him now wheresoever he fared;
Till Dobbs threw her off, with a growl rather gruff,
And begged of his captors at once to be off.

He desired Mrs. Dobbs to return straight away
To Elverton Castle; and, without delay,
To beg Captain Spark or Lord Elverton should
Come up to his rescue as soon as they could.

Then with strange forebodings and terrible grief,
Dobbs wept when they parted. But made it as brief
As the case and the complex relations allowed;
A strong man sore tried, but inflexibly proud.

VII.

Now, of all the inventions that ever came out,
There's nothing beats Railways; of that there's no doubt.
The thing is now common, with every-day seeing—
But the marvel remains, how it burst into being.

When fired with a phrenzy we knew not for what,
In that mad time when shares were so eagerly bought;
Whereof a remembrance still tenderly lingers,
How awfully burnt were so many folk's fingers.

This modern Bucephalus, snorting forth steam,
And neighing with fierce diabolical scream,—
Will Mammon then mount him and hold him in check,
With so fiery a mane on his proud arching neck?

With your Boards of Directors, supreme in control,
Who solemnly sit, overlooking the whole;
And with your Chief Managers, wise in prevision,—
How comes it that trains get so oft in collision?

And of ugly contingencies making a smash,
Sure nothing can match the express engine's dash
Into minerals or goods; or—more awful matter—
Of unshunted excursionists making a scatter.

'Tis a grim contemplation that lines are made pay,
What little they do in so dreadful a way;
And surely a man must be taught by experience,
If his wife be a widow perhaps in a year hence.

But the coolest affair is that part of the system,
By which your successor gets means to assist him;
For before you are killed they insure you your life,
And the money 's paid over at once to your wife.

Do the holders of shares, then, so simply expect
Wise rule from Directors who do not direct;
But trust to officials, who sing the old song,
And report all is right—till a smash proves all wrong?

Is the eye of responsible intelligence beaming,
When those engines rush fiercely past, panting and screaming?
Ah, no! Under pitiless pressure TO PAY,
We risk the rash venture that scatters dismay.

'Tis the blind and insatiate purse-filling spirit
Denies us control of the powers we inherit;
'Tis the terrible exigence after the cash,
When we root out the real truth, causes the smash.

The God-inspired wisdom to rule a great scheme
Cannot be responsible except as supreme;
And once 'tis empowered—at the glance of its eye
Corruption will tremble—incompetence fly.

And as if by enchantment—stern truth in their faces,
In a moment the right men are in the right places;
And Britannia will sit, like Bellona, unshaken,
In the fiery conveyance to which she has taken.

Let not Carlyle lament that our worship's at zero;
The worship will come when we once catch the hero;
And if 'tis not doomed we shall die in disasters,
Let us pray blessed heaven send us competent masters.

'Twas this instinct that wafted so suddenly high
Account-cooking Hudson, who fell from the sky
Into limbo so dark, not the devil can tell,
What corner he crept to to hide in his shell.

And let but this instinct, by true wisdom guided,
Concentrating interests now powerless divided,
Give a competent king half the power it gave Hudson,
And fear not you'll stop all this shedding of blood soon.

VIII.

As for Dobbs, 'twas by God's special mercy that he
Was not slaughtered right off, as we'll presently see,
By an accident marvellous past all belief,
To be so endangered, yet not come to grief.

The express, about four miles from Joltington Junction,
Was rattling along without fear or compunction;
The engine—two vans, with a guard in the near,
Ten carriages—then van with guard in the rear.

When suddenly at the point named, with a jerk
That made Dobbs bounce up like a ball or a cork,
The first carriage got off the rails—from what cause
Was never made out—rattling on without pause.

At the usual express-speed, still on, nothing doubting,
They rattled—the passengers screaming and shouting;
Their hats and their handkerchiefs wildly they waved—
But the train rattled on—by a miracle saved.

For a passenger standing some six-feet-six high,
Stretching out his long neck caught the engineman's eye;
Who, thinking the train dragging hard for express,
Looking back, saw the signals and cause of distress.

When they stopped, the first carriage had a wheel smashed to pieces;
Spokes twisted and folded in all sorts of creases;
Its springs, too, were broken, and bent and disjoined,
And its panels stove in by the buffer behind.

And it lay in position astride the in-rail,
With its coupling-chain twisted, just like a pig's tail,
Round the buffer, which caused poor Dobbs many a bump,
As it rattled along with a hop, skip, and jump.

Had the time been at night, or the driver less sharp,
Or a down-train had met them—then surely the warp
Of this woven romance had been slashed right across,
And his country lamented poor old Dobbs's loss.

But fate had his future adventures in store,
And destiny dealt him a little life more;
But surely the Company did all they could
To stain their grim annals with old Dobbs's blood.

And now to return to our previous theme
Of God-inspired wisdom to rule a great scheme;
If railways were railways as railways should be,
Such haps would not happen as this we now see.

But engendered of Mammon, who is poor in the gift
Of genuine wisdom, their one only shift
Is by physical force to go thundering through,
Carrying millions in safety—but killing a few.

But divine possibilities of infinite worth,
Lie waiting the wisdom that summons them forth;
Though the dim-eyed, distrustful, and blundering power,
With his wasteful devices is ruling the hour.

But his rule cannot last—nay, is crumbling away,
As fitness and beauty burst out day by day;
Till intelligence gifted with perfecting skill
Will cleanse every blood-spot that sullies them still.

But our thoughts cannot picture how perfect and sweet,
Will the swift flowing cars issue flashing and fleet;
Not panting and growling like fiends to their labour,
Each kicking and jogging and jolting its neighbour.

Like the sweep of the rapids, with tremulous hum,
On the wings of the morning they flashingly come;
When the light, like a shooting-star, past us has sprang,
We will know them at night by their musical twang.

IX.

Mr. Hunks, Dobbs's friend, had been knocked so about,
He did not know where he was when he got out;
And his other companion so trembled with fright,
Dobbs might have walked off then at liberty quite.

But Dobbs was concerned at the state of his nose
Too much to consider this chance that arose;
For he, when their carriage so frolicked about,
Had received a contusion again on the snout,

Whose previous enlargement apparently went as
A cause for its being made still more portentous;
For the extra projection in which it was shaped,
Made it come in for blows which it might have escaped.

Just as those who are prominent and active in rows,
Drop in for the major proportion of blows;
Except when firearms into action are brought,
When those at a distance, not aimed at, are shot.

But while Dobbs was feeling his nose's dimensions,
An insensible lady engaged the attentions
Of the tall man and others, around and about,
And Dobbs was as gallant as they were, don't doubt.

The face was not young, nor the form very slight,
So Dobbs thought those about her would soon get her right;
And was edging away with a smile rather grim,
When she opened her eyes and she fixed them on him.

With a wild startled look of alarm and dismay,
She turned to old Dobbs and besought him to stay;
And Dobbs recognised—what he half was afraid of,
The love-stricken dame he a conquest had made of.

The frightful alarm had brought on an attack,
Supervening upon her original crack;
And with wild supplication, refusing to sever
From Dobbs, her lost senses seemed more lost than ever.

And as is the manner of people astray,
She had all her case pat—Dobbs had nothing to say;
And of all those around them, so puzzled to judge,
None ever imagined 'twas raving and fudge.

For the pathos and pitiful tone of her voice,
With a heart-grief so broken, never more to rejoice;
The tears in the bystanders' eyes you could see,
As they marvelled what kind of a man Dobbs could be.

Some thought him her husband deserting her there,
And casting her off in heart-breaking despair;
Some thought he'd seduced her by promise of marriage,
And now would not sit with her in the same carriage.

Some thought him her trustee in charge of her cash
Running off, but, by God's judgment, stopped by this smash;
Some thought him her father disowning his daughter
On account of some intrigue in which he had caught her.

Some thought her some worn-out woman on town,
And he her flash-man now a good deal broke down;
Some thought—but, indeed, there were endless conjectures
About both, and on both appropriate strictures.

Her plaint was so pitiful—tones were so sad—
He was stamped as a ruffian—oh, awfully bad.
And then such a nose and an eye! 'Twas a wonder
The lady lamented they should be asunder.

But the line is got cleared, and the train re-connected,
In less time than might have perhaps been expected.
Mr. Hunks is again keeping Dobbs right and steady,
And the guards have disposed of the heart-broken lady.

X.

The Crackpate Asylum was just like them all,
A grim quiet mansion girt with a high wall;
And into it Dobbs and the lady were brought,
As the fittest place for them—at least, so 'twas thought.

But though they made both of them heartily welcome,
'Twas very soon found out Dobbs was not Sir Malcolm;
Though exceedingly like him—excepting his hair,
Sir Malcolm's head having been perfectly bare.

The lady the head-keeper very well knew,
And on her account only, took charge of Dobbs too,
As he seemed something to her; and both the men said,
Be he right man or not, he was wrong in the head.

So two of their keepers, the strongest they had,
Were sent to dispose of old Dobbs. With a lad
With a straight-jacket ready, but kept out of sight,
In case he showed any disposition to fight.

Show fight! Had they known what a bottled-up store
Of rage in old Dobbs was just simmering o'er
And ready to burst out, they would just as well
And readily have taken in charge a live shell.

Dobbs's discoloured eye and his ominous nose
They tried not to see when they came to dispose
Of his person. But civilly asked him to go
To apartments prepared for him. Dobbs answered: "No.

"I'll see first the principal,"—here Dobbs arose,
And both the men did rather look at his nose:
"I'll know his authority—why I am here
With fellows like you to ——. Go back to your beer.

"I'm a justice of peace, and I will not submit——;"
Here one stood on guard, quite prepared for a hit,
Dobbs stalked so enragedly. "Go back to the beer
You smell of—I tell you you're not wanted here.

"I'm a justice of peace and a churchwarden too—
Oh, Dumbledom, Dumbledom, when shall I view
Thy green lanes and gardens—oh, when shall I be
In the hall of my fathers, respected and free."

And the tears in his eyes gathered fast as he spoke,
And he felt in his throat just as if he would choke;
And he seemed, as he wept, as his hand slowly rose
To his eyes, just as though he took hold of his nose.

Whereof the effect, and indeed the whole sight,
So comical seemed, irresistible quite;
Each keeper awhile holds each side with each hand,
Till bursting out fairly, they both laughing stand.

And they laugh, and they re-laugh, and then laugh again,
Till Dobbs's face darkened to hear them; and then
In a tempest of phrensy he stamped as he spoke:
"Oh, by G—d, sirs, but this is too much for a joke."

And he made right at both then. Though what he proposed
To do at them failed. For they instantly closed
Upon him and held him as helpless between
The two, as if fixed in a vice he had been.

For their bulk was muscle, while Dobbs's was fat,
And every one knows there's a great deal in that;
At all events Dobbs was completely secured,
And in quiet quarters soon safely immured.

So safe that he could not have injured himself,
Were he ever so willing. But as on a shelf
Laid by from the world, he now calmly concentres
His thoughts on himself and his strange misadventures.

CANTO SIXTH.

I.

Now Dobbs was a man who'd have thought it a libel
To have doubted his thorough belief of the Bible;
And he practised its precepts, and did—all his might,
Just as other folks do—what was proper and right.

But like many more of us, Dobbs in his heart
Still kept a small corner reserved and apart,
With a vague sort of notion, that still would be present,
That, after all, pleasure was really pleasant.

Like a monkey at prayers, he would do his devotion,
Performing precisely genuflexion and motion;
But still he would hanker, and keep, so to speak,
A few nuts of sin in the bag of his cheek.

He did not exactly propose to deceive,
But he did as we all do—believe we believe;
But for positive faith, or available hold
On God—he had bought where the thing was not sold.

A truth is a truth, though a small dog may bark it—
And the truth is the article's not in the market;
We've forgot what it is—that its wanted at all;
And of course no shop keeps what is never in call.

The material solvency of the creation
Being now the extent of our faith's aspiration,
The author has taken a fancy to show
How events might befall if the fact were just so.

If 'twere really the fact that there were nothing more
Than a God who had left us his laws to explore—
And did not as a Spiritual Essence embrace
And transfuse all existence with guidance and grace.

The want of which drives us like raging beasts forth
In our madness and crime, making hell upon earth;
But the gift of which, greatly and graciously given,
Is the power that will re-create earth into heaven.

A power that, like sunlight, will flash from the eye
Of the heart that contains it, and propagate joy;
Dispersing delusion, and teaching anew
The gospel of gladness, eternal and true.

The expounder of laws may pretend to explain
The mystery of life from the form of the brain;
But the brain's antecedent is a primary will,
Whose source is the unexplained mystery still.

For man, without God, is a poor petty thing,
Though he swagger and strut like a mannikin king;
And it is for their absolute self-abnegation,
We love the great sons of the true inspiration.

To listen devoutly with quick-beating heart,
And receive what is given is their only art;
And ever they own, in that presence divine,
What is good is of Thee—the imperfect is mine.

And thus in the spirit of wisdom and love,
They dwell in the regions of peace, far above
The fume and the fret, and the petty disdain
Of a world ever void, ever vexed, ever vain.

The proximate cause of contention on earth,
Is the blind zeal of those who in God's cause go forth;
For the genius inspired from Divine Wisdom's source,
Needs no aid from the weakness of physical force.

Let physical force law and order maintain,
And truth will its own bloodless victories gain;
For he who can truly interpret God's will,
Goeth forth in His power irresistible still.

II.

Now it certainly seems an extremely unpleasant
Predicament Dobbs has got into at present,
To be torn as he has been *a mensa et thoro*
And confined as a madman *in carcere duro*.

If the devil did deliberate enmity cherish
Against him, he could not more perfectly perish
Every shred and concurrence of marriage delight,
Than Dobbs has attained to this terrible night.

Shut up in the dark there, it loomed through his mind
How events were in labour, and he was confined;
And in confluent horror his thoughts bodied forth,
What hideous monstrosity might be the birth.

He looked o'er the brink of that horrible gulf,
Where the shape of humanity grins as a wolf,
Or mopes as an idiot—and the hair, firm-rooted
In his scalp, rose with horror—so lately disputed.

He imagined himself some fantastic old fellow,
With visage of dry-drawn and parchment-like yellow,
An inmate established, full of whims and vagaries—
And startled to think then how many a one there is.

Peradventure, oppressed with maniacal gloom,
And moping from sight in a dark cornered room,
He pictured poor Dobbs—and he shuddered to think,
Perhaps such a one might be seen through a chink.

He listens for sounds, and imagines the moaning
Of the night-wind might be some poor lunatic groaning,
And sad with a sorrow—perhaps quite as real
As some their deplorers do not think ideal.

But talking of night-winds and moanings—Dobbs hears
With more and more certainty, sound on his ears
A low smothered shuffling of feet on the wall
Just under his window—he don't like at all.

And once for a moment distinctly he heard
As the scrape of a plank—and then a sharp word
Of low whispered anger—an oath or a curse,
Such as burglars might use—just for want of a worse.

And then all was still again, ever so long,
Till Dobbs thought 'twas his fancy o'erworking and strong
Misled him.—But hush!—'Twas a lantern's flash!
And don't you hear sounds now of lifting the sash?

Then, trembling with terror, lay Dobbs in a sweat,
Through those moments of horror he ne'er can forget,
When his heart and his lungs palpitated and panted,
To think who were there, and whatever they wanted.

The unseasonable hour for a visit so private,
And the mode of ingress they adopt to arrive at
An interview with him—made Dobbs rather jealous
They were ticket-of-leave men, or such low-bred fellows.

Now lunatics, Dobbs thought, were quite bad enough,
But burglars were fellows unpleasantly rough;
Rather given to carrying bludgeons and knives,
To take other people's and preserve their own lives.

All which—but hush; hark!—for a figure now enters
The window, and with the most stealthy step ventures
To Dobbs's bedside—and the lantern's flash
Sweeps over his face—and is closed in a dash.

"All right. 'Tis the fellow." He used a strong word
Quite unfit to be written, or spoken, or heard.
"Get to work with your knife, now," Dobbs shuddered to hear,
"And I will keep watch." And the ruffian came near.

III.

Now Dobbs felt by instinct that if he lay still,
Perhaps they would neither his blood nor brains spill;
And so by a very great effort he kept
Just as quiet as if he had actually slept.

Nay, more; he would now and then draw a great breath,
As one sometimes does in a sleep deep as death;
Which greatly relieved from a feeling of tension
His chest—under all the proceedings we mention.

By the sounds he could hear, he could guess they were groping
All about, just a slit of their lantern oping;
And much surprised was he to hear them pull out
All the old shoes and boots that were lying about.

And silent and eager they seemed to examine
The soles and the heels where the shoemakers cram in
The stuffing, as if they expected to find
Some treasure in there, or inside, where they're lined.

Not seeming successful, they then took to cutting
And splitting them open where'er you could put in
A small thing of value—but still nothing told
They had found the least mite of a jewel or gold.

They ended with cursing mankind and the world,
As in grim disappointment they recklessly hurled
In a corner the cuttings of boot and shoe leather,
Which they left in a heap on the floor altogether.

Then a colloquy followed between the choice pair—
Who were masked, by the way, with a provident care—
As to whether or not they should murder their neighbour,
As a slight satisfaction for losing their labour.

One specially made this a grievance, and blamed
With bitterness Dobbs, whom he otherwise named,
For not having jewels and sovereigns hid
In boot heels made to close like a snuff-box's lid.

For this, it appeared, they by some means had heard
Was the practice, distinctly and truly averred,
Of the patient whom Dobbs had been seized for resembling,
And for whom he now lay in bed sweating and trembling.

The other demurred to the bloody conclusion
Of Dobbs's career,—unless in delusion,
By finding some knife of his own on the shelf,
They could make it appear he had done it himself.

Which by good luck they could not. And then they at length
Determined, as Dobbs seemed a man of some strength,
Who might not die easy, to let him live on;
And themselves now get quickly and quietly gone.

And is it not monstrous and consummate folly,
Such ruffians as these should be set adrift wholly
To prey on mankind—with police as conservers,
Who get mauled nigh to death with so-called life-preservers.

In government's name they get tickets of leave
To resume their old practice—to murder and thieve—
For that it amounts to. And, caught in new crimes,
They repent and get leave again—times upon times.

And nobody bursts out to laugh in the street
At the solemn grimace and the humbug they meet;
Which complacently sun themselves in the fair day,
As though they expected to tarry alway.

But never in time did the finger of God
So stand out in events, both at home and abroad,
And say to so much of most ancient persistence:
"Time's up!—pray make haste to go out of existence!"

IV.

When Doctor Grimm entered—he had been from home
On the previous evening—his eyes travelled from
Old Dobbs to the great pile of cut-up shoe leather—
And of course he connected the two facts together.

It was quite in their way, in fact, as a vagary,
That patients should play such a prank, just to vary
Their monot'nous existence, and in such employment
Extract out of mad-life a little enjoyment.

It was no great surprise then—but just was accepted
As proof of lost reason, and that Dobbs overstepped it
In mania destructive—the technical term
For Dobbs's complaint's more particular form.

But possession of knives was a thing not allowed
At all; and in patients hot-headed and proud,
As Dobbs had appeared, was so pregnant with danger,
The first point to gain was disarming the stranger.

To attain which, the doctor then gravely addressed himself,
By inviting old Dobbs first to sit down and rest himself,
And trying to draw on a calm conversation,
On subjects which could not cause Dobbs provocation.

While Dobbs of course stuck to his grand proposition—
The wrong he endured, and the groundless suspicion
Of madness against him—a theme that's so frequent
With madmen, it caused no surprise as a sequent.

His account of the burglars was quite understood
To illustrate his lively invention of mood;
And particulars vouching the verity's fact,
Acknowledged as proof of his wonderful tact.

But at last, wearied out with the dodge off and on,
The Doctor assumed a more summary tone—
Fixed his eyes on old Dobbs with so frightful a glare,
And demanded his knife—Dobbs was paralysed there.

So taken aback and unnerved did he feel
By the power and the suddenness of the appeal,
He went pale and then flushed with the mere agitation,
Produced by the sense of his strange situation.

Which of course was received as a fresh exhibition
Of proof of th' original false proposition.
Then he faltered he had none. And scarcely he did it,
When Doctor Grimm bellowed: "Then where have you hid it?"

And renewing the stare of his terrible eyes,
To Dobbs's renewed and unpleasant surprise;
"If you won't give it up, we've a way to admonish
Such gentry as you, who compel us to punish."

Then Dobbs, quite insulted to think of what next
Might be done to him on this Crackpatish pretext,
Began to show heat; out of patience and quite
Disposed to—oppression's last argument—fight.

Which, of course, more completely confirmed than ever
The Doctor's belief that he must now endeavour
To subdue Dobbs's stubborn and obdurate temper,
By a slight touch of what makes most lunatics whimper.

For the use and possession of knives was a crime,
Demanding correction without loss of time;
And the law was that, whether or not they confess it,
By instant and summary measures—suppress it.

And had not Dobbs's headpiece been of—as we've seen,
A hardish description, he might really have been
Driven frantic in truth—by the singular shape
In which destiny closed on him, without escape.

V.

For of all the absurd and preposterous sequels
Of historical narratives—not a one equals
This adventure of Dobbs's, whose issue, we see,
So step by step followed—it could not but be.

No link of the chain from his first setting out
Is wanting—to cross with a shadow of doubt
The entire possibility, and certainty too,
That each fact related was perfectly true.

Poor fellow! his nerves were most terribly shaken—
Though his nose was improved by the measures then taken;
And but for the opportune entrance of friends,
'Twas a critical question which way the case ends.

For after the Doctor retired, in his wrath
At Dobbs's resistance, he prescribed a shower-bath,
To be poured full power on him until he revealed
In submission the place where his knife was concealed.

So the gentlemen came who the previous night
Had held poor old Dobbs in embraces so tight;
And after a terrible struggle they clapped him
In the bath in the robe in which nature had wrapped him.

Now Dobbs from his youth had a nervous dislike
To feeling a cascade of cold water strike
Down the spine of his back—for it choked off his breath
In a spasm—he so gasped with, he dreaded like death.

No wonder he strained then each nerve and each muscle,
Though at last overpowered in the terrible tussle;
And, choking with choler, crushed inside the door,
Where he could now do nothing but bellow and roar.

Which he did at a great rate—a pig's dying moments
Being nothing to his protestations and comments
On the barbarous wrong, as he bellowed, half-mad,
He had no hidden knife, and he never had had.

Then again flushing down came the pitiless storm,
As it lashed head and shoulders, and streamed down his form,
While he struggled, like Samson, asunder to tear
Its walls, and burst forth from his prison-house there.

And this for five minutes had gone on or so,
Dobbs's bellowing shouts dying gradually low—
When the clattering sound of quick steps on the stair
Came hurrying up in hot haste then and there.

And the door bursting open, Sir Lionel entered,
Followed close by Lord Frederick—and all their eyes centered
On the shower-bath, and suddenly opening the door,
Old Dobbs—like Silenus—bounced out on the floor.

And his eye on Lord Frederick first falling, he fell
On his breast, overpowered by his heart's rising swell;
And he cried like a baby—hysterical sobs—
"Was ever poor wretch so maltreated as Dobbs!"

Now Dobbs, all o'er spangled with drops as of dew,
Gave Lord Frederick, of course, a slight benefit too;
But his heart being but half-relieved of its swell,
He turned and embraced next Sir Lionel as well.

And though he got not wet quite as much as my lord,
It was too good a joke—thus the balance restored—
For my lord to let pass—so each laughed at the other—
When the keepers joined in—and they all laughed together.

But Dobbs only shook himself—proof against chaff—
As he said with a sigh—"Yes, my friends, you may laugh;
But had you been drenched in a deluge of water
As I've been—you'd find it was no laughing matter."

VI.

And it was not until after dinner next day,
That Dobbs got a little more lively and gay,
When approaching the Lushingport Station he felt
That his wife was not far off—and seemed quite to melt.

Subdued with the strange and unheard-of experience
Which he felt he'd remember—oh, many a year hence—
He seemed now to feel a domesticer love
For his dear Mrs. Dobbs—like a dove for a dove.

And his heart went all warm as he thought how he'd clasp
His wife in his arms with a fond husband's grasp;
When the past all forgotten—the future agreed on,
'Twould be Adam and Eve in a Dumbledom Eden.

But now here they stop where the tickets are taken,
At the Lushingport Station—all feel rather shaken
And stiff—having run a long journey—when lo!
The ladies are waiting to meet them!—How so?

The Ladies Godiva and Spark are both there,
With something of some sort to tell—by the air
Of important concernment which ladies put on
When they have some unheard of mishap to make known.

"What is it?" Lord Frederick asks of his dear,
"And in Goodness's name what has brought you both here?"—
"Come on, dear, at once now, back to the hotel;
This is no fitting place for the news we've to tell."—

"In the devil's name why make a mystery thus?"
But his lady just answered: "Now don't make a fuss.
For its nothing concerning either you or me, dear,
If you must know. But come on at once and you'll hear."

So they went on at once. And as soon as they got
To a room altogether, the ladies then brought
Their handkerchiefs out, and, with weeping and sobs,
They cried like two babies, "Dear, dear Mr. Dobbs!"

Whereat Dobbs, semi-petrified, sank in a chair,
Looking up with so blank and bewildered a stare,
Prepared for some fearful catastrophe's visit,
He gazed and he gasped out: "For Godsake what is it?"

Whereupon the two ladies burst out in fresh sobs,
And renewed their lamenting—"Dear, dear Mr. Dobbs;"
And then in a fresh burst of grief they inquired
Of their lords: "Has there nothing about it transpired?"

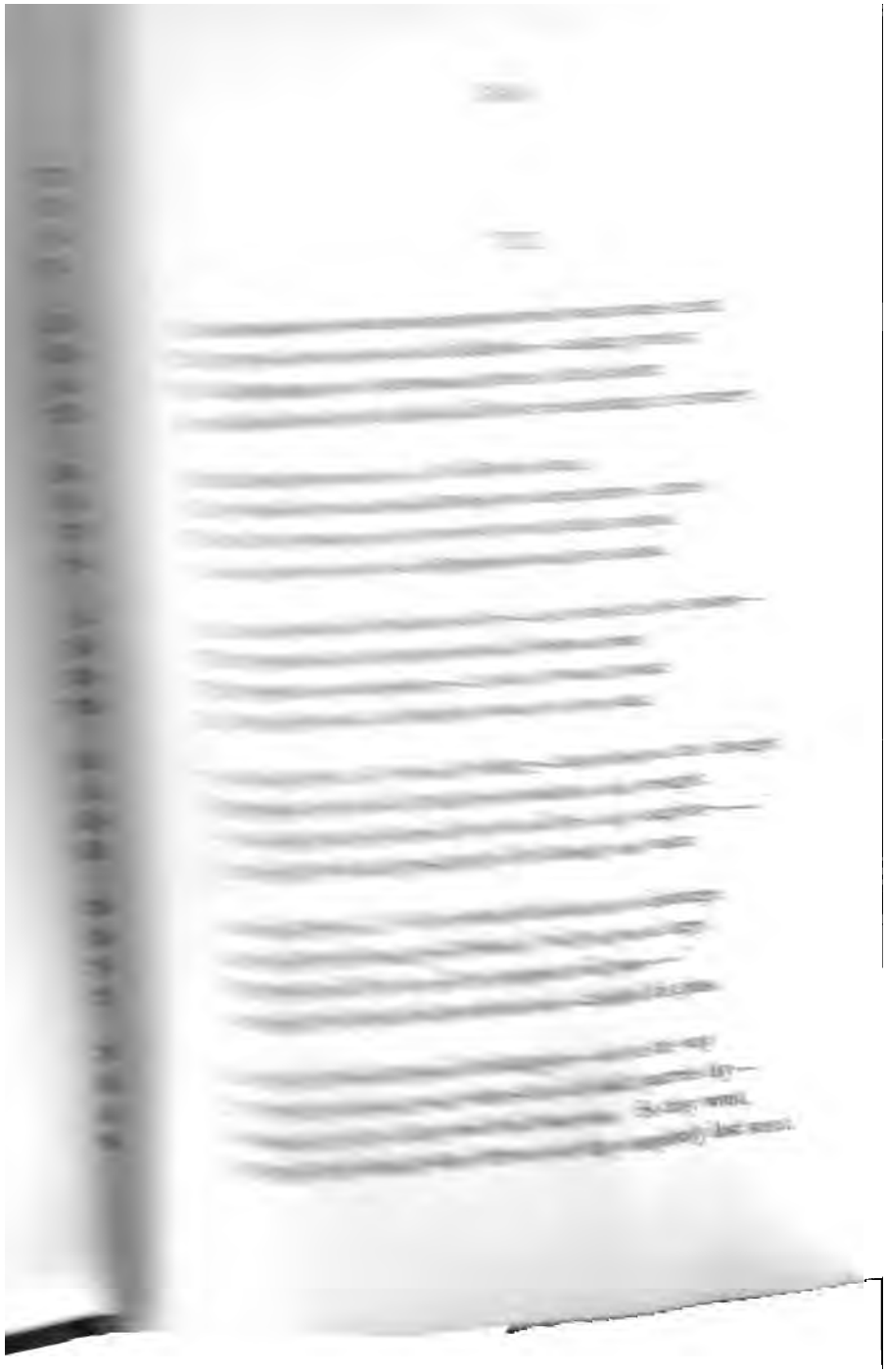
Then Lord Elverton stamped, and Sir Lionel swore,
As they paced in impatience the carpeted floor;
"What have you to tell? Be it ever so bad,
Let it out," said my Lord, "else you'll drive the man mad!"

"In God's name, what is it?" said Sir Lionel, turning
On his wife with a flashing eye, fierce rage so burning,
She thought she had raised a sufficient emotion,
And might safely let out now the cause of commotion.

She said: "You must know we have traced them to here"—
"Traced whom?" roared Sir Lionel, "For Godsake, be clear,
And quick to reveal it." And soon all now known is,
When Lady Spark spoke—"Mrs. Dobbs and Adonis!"

And then in one general burst of new grief,
They wept and they sobbed and they sighed for relief;
And Dobbs, like a man who would never speak more,
Rolled round off his chair, and fell flat on the floor.

With the volatile salts they applied at his nose,
And the brandy spooned down his throat, dose upon dose,
He looked up at last; and as if in pain, frowning,
Murmured forth, low and slow: "This is worse than the drowning."



And there as they stood—Dobbs was somewhat surprised
To see George—with his ladder on one shoulder poised,
With a mutton shank under his arm, and a pot
In his hand—coming on in great haste to the spot.

He stopped at a hollow, close by, thick with bushes,
And his ladder immediately down through them pushes;
And they found 'twas a chalk-pit, all grown o'er with brambles,
Some man had slipped into when out on his rambles.

Then Dobbs and his friends looking down through the leaves,
Could see how the starved man the liquor receives—
So eagerly snatching to drink from the pot
He spilt half a gill of good beer on the spot.

Then seizing the mutton—without knife or plate—
He gnawed it and bolted it rather than ate;
And even when the flesh and the beer were all gone—
He sucked the dry pot—and he gnawed the bare bone.

When he finished, old Dobbs and his friends stood about
In expectancy, waiting to see him come out—
When who should they find out this starved wretch unknown is,
But the doomed-by-Dobbs traitor—the hapless Adonis.

So dirty, disfigured, and battered, and pale,
His haggard appearance could tell its own tale;
While his delicate finger tips, raw to the bone
With climbing, told what awful nights he had known.

With his mutton bone under his arm—like the flute
Of some street musician with voice never mute—
He stepped from the ladder, and at once was preparing
To gnaw—when his eye fell on Dobbs at him staring.

Then Adonis's eyes kindled up, like the eyes
Of some savage beast when its prey it espies;
And he leaped upon Dobbs—and he brandished his bone,
And had certainly struck—but for those looking on.

But Sir Lionel—prompt and expert as a soldier
In action—at once caught Adonis's shoulder,
And his arm, in his anger upraised for the blow,
That might have sent Dobbs to the regions below.

VIII.

And there they stood gazing each one at the other,
Poor Dobbs his emotion scarce able to smother,
As he gazed on the traitor so eager for strife,
As was natural quite—and demanded his wife.

A satanical laugh, from the depth of the throat,
And a look of mere scorn, were the answer he got,
With the question—I must say exceedingly cool
On Adonis's part—did Dobbs think him a fool?

Which amounted, in fact, to an open confession,
That, having obtained surreptitious possession,
He intended to keep it—a doctrine so awful,
It destroyed all amenities sacred and lawful.

An inveterate enmity seemed so to burn
In Adonis's heart—he would spit at and spurn
Every proffer of peace—and, so jealously cruel,
With delight caught at Dobbs's demand for a duel.

I must say I'm strongly inclined to suppose
There is some hidden mystery yet to disclose;
Adonis so seemed to—though he had begun it—
Think he had been injured, and old Dobbs had done it.

And George's whole manner and bearing, whenever
Old Dobbs made the least or remotest endeavour
To pump out of him any jottings of history,
Made the whole case appear more and more of a mystery.

For George had a comical eye to begin with,
And a comical face altogether to grin with—
And the comical dodging with which he evaded,
Just showed he knew something—but never betrayed it.

When Dobbs put a question, George studied his eye,
With a look so ineffably puzzled and sly,
As if to interpret some innermore meaning
Behind it, which all this appearance was screening.

And, as Dobbs put his question straightforward and fair,
George, of course, could not find what had never been there—
Though if he felt puzzled himself, and astray,
He was too sharp to own he had missed his own way.

Mrs. Dobbs being lost, then, to all present history—
Her name, like the pipe of peace, buried in mystery—
They dug up the war hatchet, bloody and rusty,
In the shape of long pistols, terrific and trusty.

Not exactly agreeable with their one eye,
More black than bewitching, when levelled on high
In a cool steady hand, and all ready at call
To astonish your nob with its conical ball.

And can it be possible men will perform
Such wit-wandered antics in passion's fierce storm;
And in deadly rage meet, in the fair face of heaven,
And blow out the small quantum of brains they have given?

Yea, nations will sanction the purpose and use
Of art's mystic powers to this monstrous abuse;
And your mail-covered "Warriors" astonish old Ocean,
With a plunge so unwieldy, he laughs at the motion.

What dote you on, England? What dream you of, France?
Thus to play the fool's game, where there's no winning chance;
When together your word might command the whole world,
And the red flag of war never more be unfurled.

Let the brotherly bonds of reciprocal trade
Have freedom to flourish—and be not afraid
That nations so near will not render each other
The clenched hand of friendship, as brother with brother.

IX.

John Bull's a great sheep—and the flukes at his liver,
Find the feeding so fat they will stick there for ever;
And John, if he's wise, will take means to ensure
A—no, not republican—radical cure.

Not extension of suffrage will prove our salvation—
But a radical change in the hearts of the nation;
The truth we want teaching is old as the past—
'Tis for want of the will to adopt it we're fast.

Let us quit the illusion that government jobs
Can be found for us all—lest we find, like old Dobbs,
We have lost what we aimed at, while blood and confusion
Is the scourge shook on high to flog out our delusion.

Let each daily go forth to an honest man's labour,
With a heart true to God, and not false to his neighbour;
And when truth is the fashion the liar will tremble,
And shrink out of sight where he dare not dissemble.

Brother Jonathan, whipping creation withal,
Is now about flogging himself after all—
Though backward about it. When he do break the skin,
Let us hope he will whip him a little truth in.

Likewise common sense—which republicans needn't
Dispense with—though possibly all were agreed on't:
And with these two to guide it—I can't tell—can you?
But the best constitution may weather it through.

—— Ah, brothers in blood, this is terrible news,*
And our hearts to it credence would gladly refuse;
'Tis so strange to our notion to listen in fear,
When the cannon-boom tells us the mail steamer's here.

The cloud has long threatened—and now must it burst
In war fratricidal, and doubly accursed?
Oh, sons of our fathers, can we think, and not feel
Every shot that strikes home, every stab of your steel?

With the contest between you—the sides you have taken,
And the war ye will wage—civilisation is shaken;
And the nation that nursed you, far, far o'er the sea,
Will be anxiously asking—how long shall it be?

* Baltimore street fight.

The grim Rule of Force may in blood flood the streets
Of the towns of old Europe, when young Freedom bleats ;
But Britannia, in sadness, will bow her proud crest,
At the echo of Warsaw that comes from the West.

Then let us read the lesson of this far stretching strife ;
That the form is the carcase—the spirit is life ;
Since the bones of the Old and the New World rattle
To the same dismal ditty, of bloodshed and battle.

Let us know that in God's sight a lie is not past—
But will issue in blood and confusion at last ;
That a spirit of truth in us, living and breathing,
Is a better protection than ships with steel sheathing.

The steel sheathing dodge is the self-confessed evil
Of a man who believes not in God, but the devil ;
And the fact is, we're told, there are guns made to rip
Steel bolts through and through both your sheathings and ship.

And so, what better are we with all this expense,
If the devil still gets at us through our defence ?
On the faith they'd protect us we've paid millions many—
And we're not secure yet—though they've spent every penny.

The fact is, they've got so to spending—these years,
That somehow or other the cash disappears ;
And if John Bull be wise, he will just have a look
At his little accounts, some wet day with the cook.

X.

Now Dobbs, being deliberate in all that he did,
And prepared for the worst that might happen—yet hid
In futurity's womb—considered—ay, marry!
Were he wounded or killed he'd be awkward to carry.

And, therefore, in following out this great duel,
Which he did as a duty—without any cruel
Or bloodthirsty motive—he'd rather prefer
Being nearer to Dumbledom than where they were.

Two miles from the hall, at the back of a hill,
Lay a paddock where swine had been fattened to kill,
Which he deemed the most fit and appropriate ground
For the business in hand could be anywhere found.

His friends, too, perceiving the reason of what
He said—in the case he were wounded or shot,
Were easily persuaded to take a trip down,
By the railroad, as far as old Dumbledom town.

Lord Elverton felt quite an interest now
In Dobbs's adventures—and felt, too, somehow,
A presentiment, though all so dark now appeared,
As the black cloud wore on the look out would be cleared.

From the sporting performance of Dobbs and Adonis—
All which, through the small boy, now publicly known is—
He had a strong notion the field would not flood—
As in pig killing time—with the shedding of blood.

But he rather was startled on the previous night—
Spent at Dumbledom, in a hotel, out of sight—
To find their fixed will, in this fiercest of quarrels,
To fight with revolvers with six loaded barrels.

And when, in the morning sun's low slanting beams,
They are brought face to face, and all ready, it seems,
They had notions of dodging and skipping in action,
Quite as like to give seconds as selves satisfaction.

They tossed for first shot, and old Dobbs, being winner,
Let fly at Adonis, and tipped him a skinner;
For the ball whistling past, rather startlingly near,
Took off a small slip of the skin of his ear.

Not a bad shot for Dobbs, thought Adonis, alert
To the fact that their game now was—hurt or be hurt;
So he took steady aim—not a bad hit for some—
And shot off the tip of old Dobbs's left thumb.

Which Dobbs never knew till he felt the blood wet
On his fingers; which made him more savagely set
On Adonis's life—now the only means known,
In his present position, of saving his own.

So he took a run in, while Adonis jumped back,
And Dobbs fired and missed. Then Adonis's crack
Followed close, missing too. And they both, for awhile,
Fired, skipping and dodging, in very strange style.

Till the last shot of all, on Adonis's part,
Fired with cool steady aim, struck old Dobbs near the heart;
And, feeling the blood soak through shirt, vest, and all,
He thought, being killed, that he ought now to fall.

So he fell. And they rushed to him, raising him up.
And he said, when he'd drunk from the brandy flask cup:
"Farewell. I forgive you. Repent of your crime.
Remember me, friends. I am ebbing from time.

"When you bury me, 'grave on my tombstone hereafter:
'Here lies Dobbs, who was born in a great roar of laughter;
Who was laughed at all through life; and now, in his coffin,
He grins, as he hears all posterity laughing.'"

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